CORTOMALTESE

LA JEUNESSE

Hugo Pratt

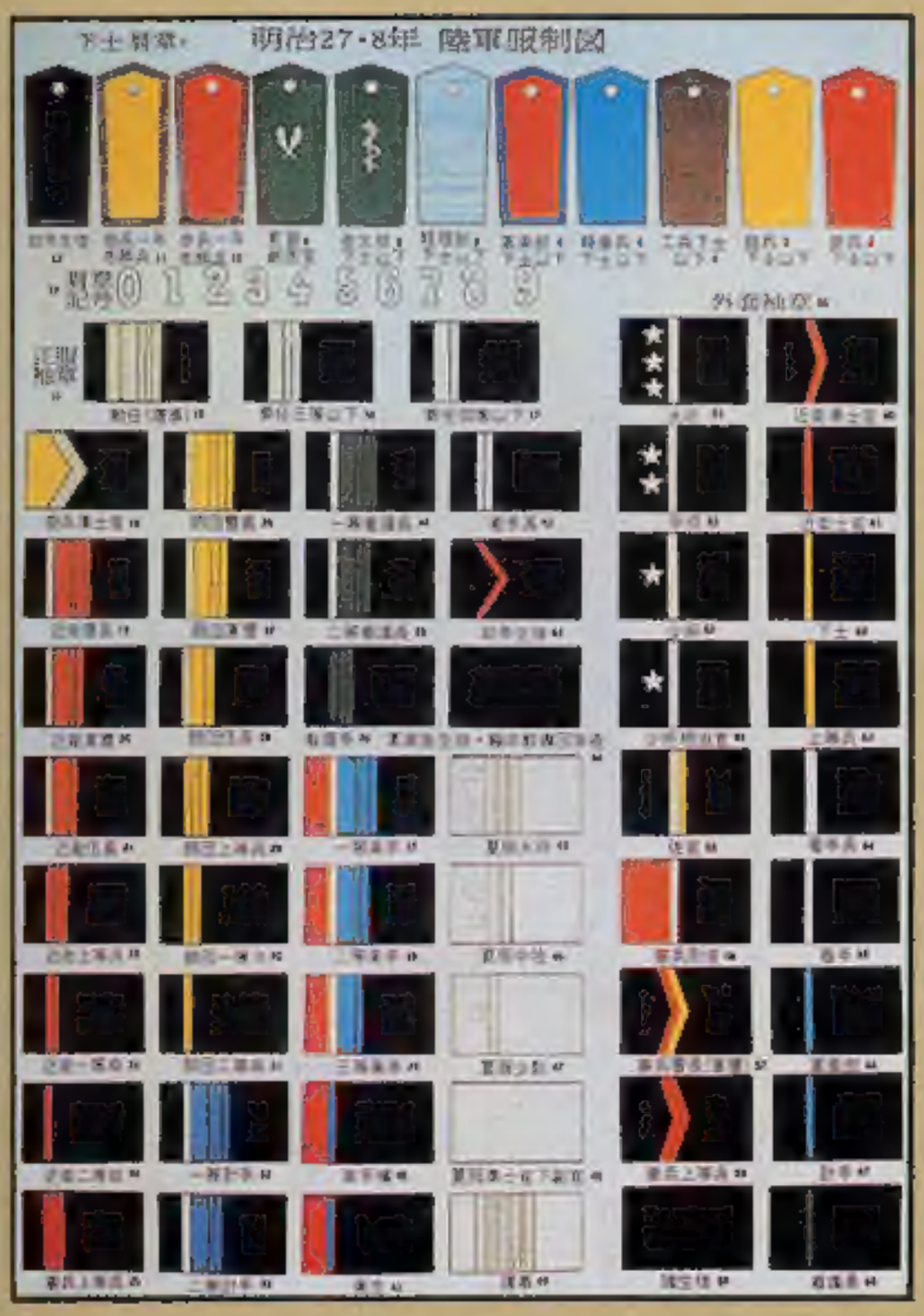
Before getting into the story, it might be interesting to run through the origin of the Russo-Japanese war. Every peace treaty carries within it the seed of future discord. Such was the case for the treaty of Schimonoseki which, in 1895, put an end to the conflict with China, but started an even worse one with Russia. The Russians saw Japanese expansionism block their route to the Yellow Sea and to a harbour constantly free of ice which would have given them the possibility to impose themselves in the seas of Asia. Through the treaty of Shimonoseki of the 17th of April, 1985, China gave, amongst other things, the Liaotung peninsula to Japan at the tip of which could be found the ports of Dalny and Port Arthur (what is today Lushun). As soon as this treaty was ratified by the mikado, Russia, with the support of France and Germany, advised Japan to give back Liaotung to China, in the interest of peace in the Far East. Japan, weary from its war and incapable of confronting a coalition of three super-powers, was compelled to reopen negotiations with China and to sign on the 8th of November 1895 a new treaty in Peking in which they gave up the occupation of and sovereignty over the Liaotung peninsula. Then followed immediate agreements between China and Russia to build a Chinese railway starting from the Transsiberian line in Chita, going through Manchuria via Harbin, and ending in Vladivostok. This agreement included a loan from France and coverage by Russo-Chinese banks which thus became Russo-Asiatic banks responsible for the construction and exploitation of the railway. The same treaty gave Russia a concession on Port Arthur renewable every 25 years. The Japanese were greatly shocked and dismayed. But the time was not yet ripe for war action. It's in 1904 that Russian provocation, in the form of the occupation of Manchuria and strategic positions in Korea, became too great for the Japanese to bear. On the 9th of February, 1904 the Russo-Japanese war began. A few months later, the young Corto Maltese and his nemesis Rasputin were to meet for the first time in the middle of this conflict. . .

Hugo Pratt.

Uniformes des officiers et des soldats de l'armée japonaise

La numérotation de toutes les planches est faite selon le critère japonais : du grade le plus haut au grade le plus bas.
Au-dessus : 1/12 Pattes d'épaule. 13 (14/31), galons d'uniforme de parade. 32 (33/34), galons des uniformes d'ordonnance. 35 (36/56), écussons (col) d'uniforme de parade.
à gauche : 1/3 Habit de cérémonie de fonctionnaire public. 4-5-6. Général de Corps d'armée. 7/8 Général de division. 9/10. Général de division de cavalerie. 11. Livre illustré sur les vêtements des nobles.

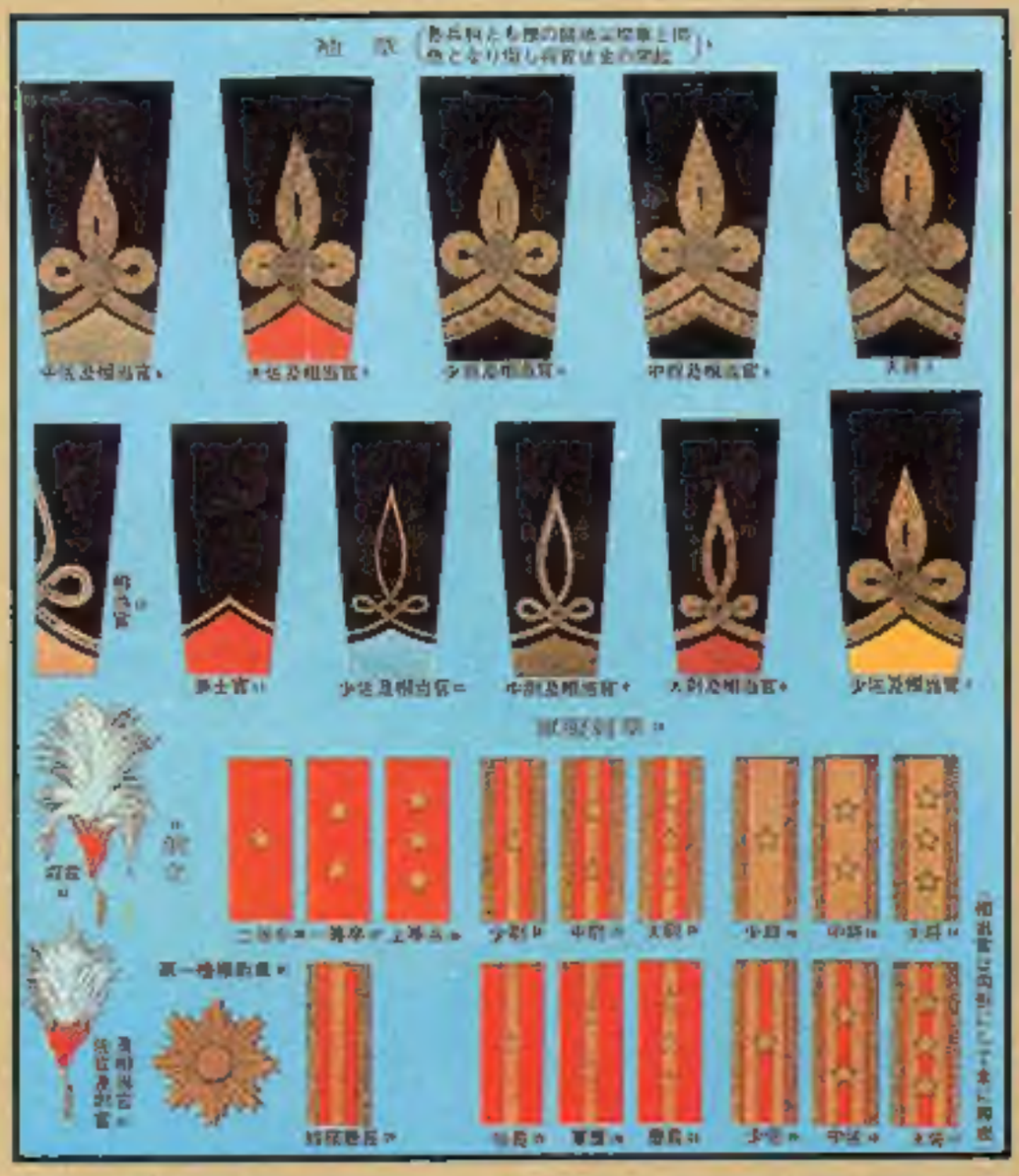
A gauche : 1. Général de corps d'armée à attributions spéciales. 2. Sous-lieutenant d'une unité de frontière. Au-dessus : 5. Capote d'officier. 6. Premier musicien. 7. Uniforme de soldat de 1re classe de ligne et du génie. 8. Uniforme de sous-lieutenant de l'intendance. Page de droite : 3. Uniforme de type I de sous-lieutenant de cavalerie de la Garde impériale. 4. Uniforme de caporal d'une unité de frontière. 9. Uniforme de sous-lieutenant de cavalerie. 10. Capote de colonel de ligne. 11. Élève de l'école militaire.



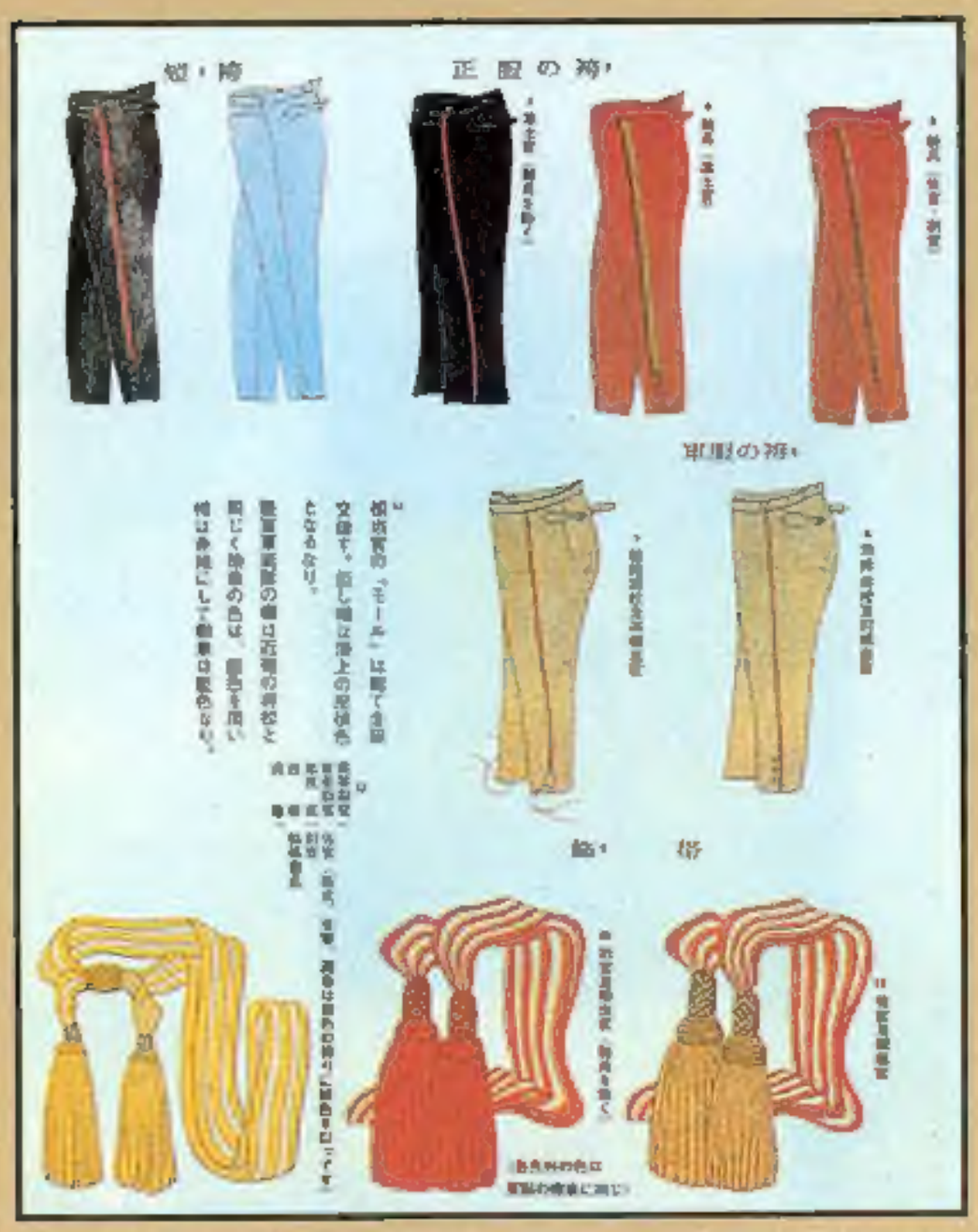
1 (2/13). Pattes d'épaule de soldat. 14 (15/49). Galons d'uniforme de parade. 50 (51/68). Galons de capote.

1. Généraux et officiers de grade équivalent. 2. De colonel à maréchal. 3. Sergent. 4. Soldat attaché au service de santé. 5. Insigne de coiffure de type I. 6. Insigne de coiffure de type II. 7/49. Coiffures de type I. 50/64. Coiffures de type II.

1. (2/13) Coiffures militaires de type I. 14. Coiffure de type II. 15. Insigne. 16. Insigne de soldat de la Garde Impériale. 17/18. Uniforme de parade d'officier de cavalerie : dos et face. 19/20. Uniforme de parade : dos et face. 21. Veste.



1 (2/12). Écussons (de manche). 13 (14/33). Pattes d'épaule.



1. Pantalons. 2 (3/5). Pantalons d'uniformes de parade. 6 (7/8). Pantalons d'uniformes réglementaires. 9. Ceintures d'apparat (la couleur correspond à celle de l'écusson).

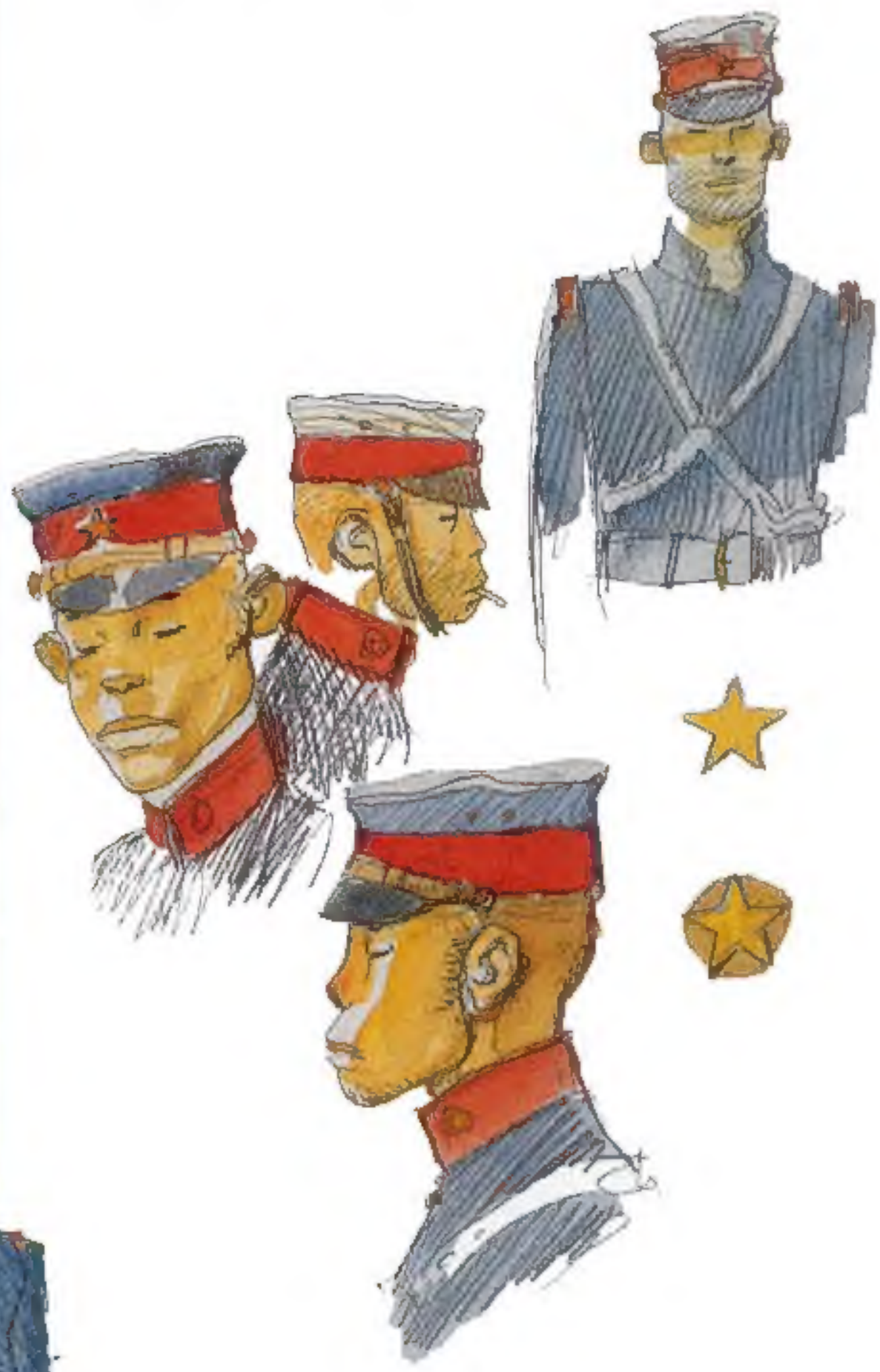
1/3. Pantalons d'officiers et de militaires de grade équivalent. 4. Ceinture de général (général de corps d'armée à attributions spéciales). 5. Deux étoiles pour généraux de corps d'armée. 6. Une étoile pour général de division. 7 (8/11). Écussons (col)d'uniformes de cérémonie. 12 (13/21). Écussons d'uniformes réglementaires. 22 (23/25). Pattes d'épaule d'uniformes de gala.

1 et 2 (3/13). Ceintures d'apparat et glands. 14 (15/21). Vestes. 22 (23/28). Vestes d'uniformes de parade. 29 (30/43). Pantalons.

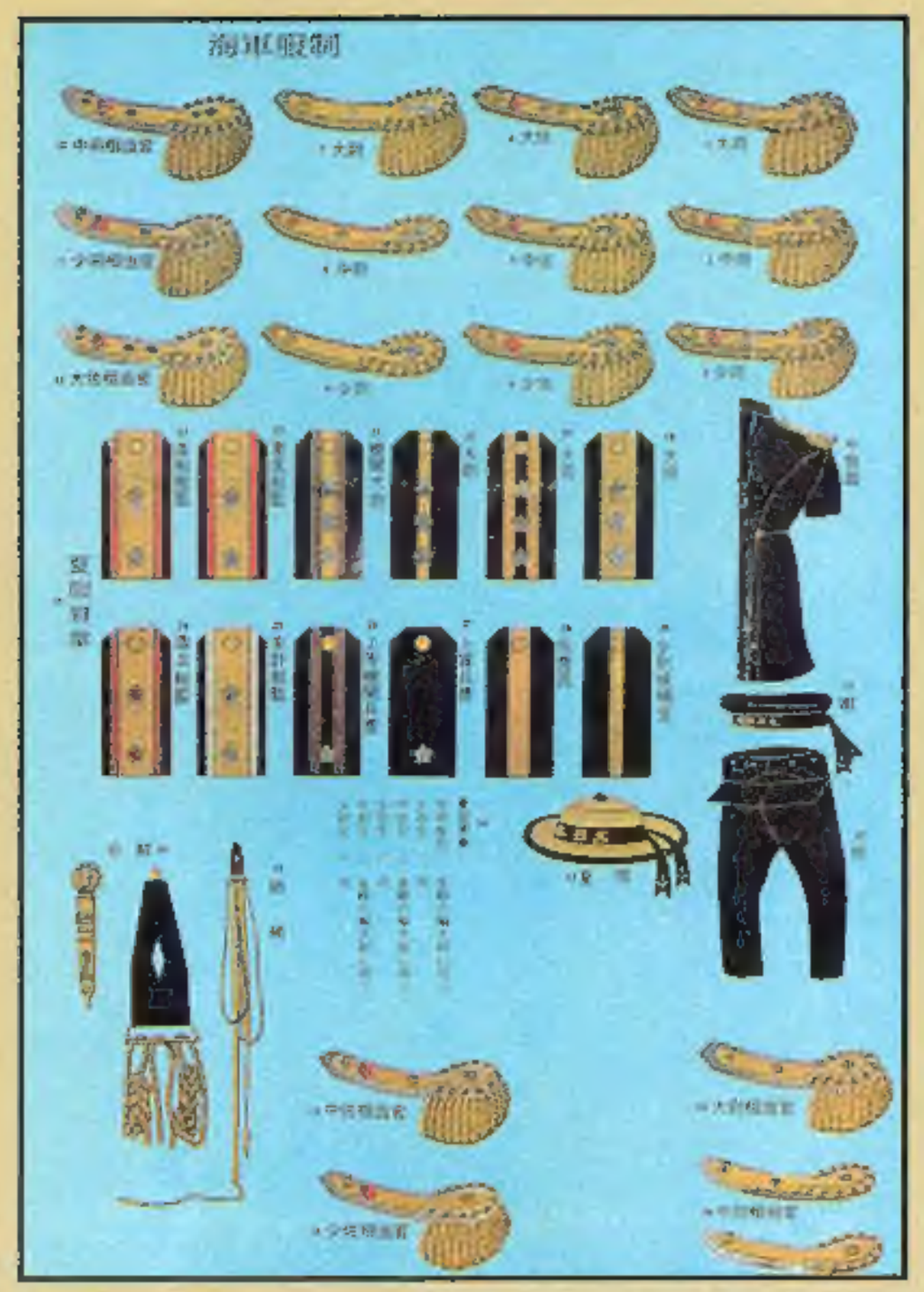
OFFICIERS
D'ARTILLERIE

VERT : CAVALERIE
BLEU : GROUPE SANITAIRE
ROUGE : INFANTERIE

L'ARMÉE JAPONAISE
EST UN CURIEUX MÉLANGE
DE MATÉRIEL MODERNE
ET D'ATTITUDES MÉDIÉVALES
DU BUSHIDO



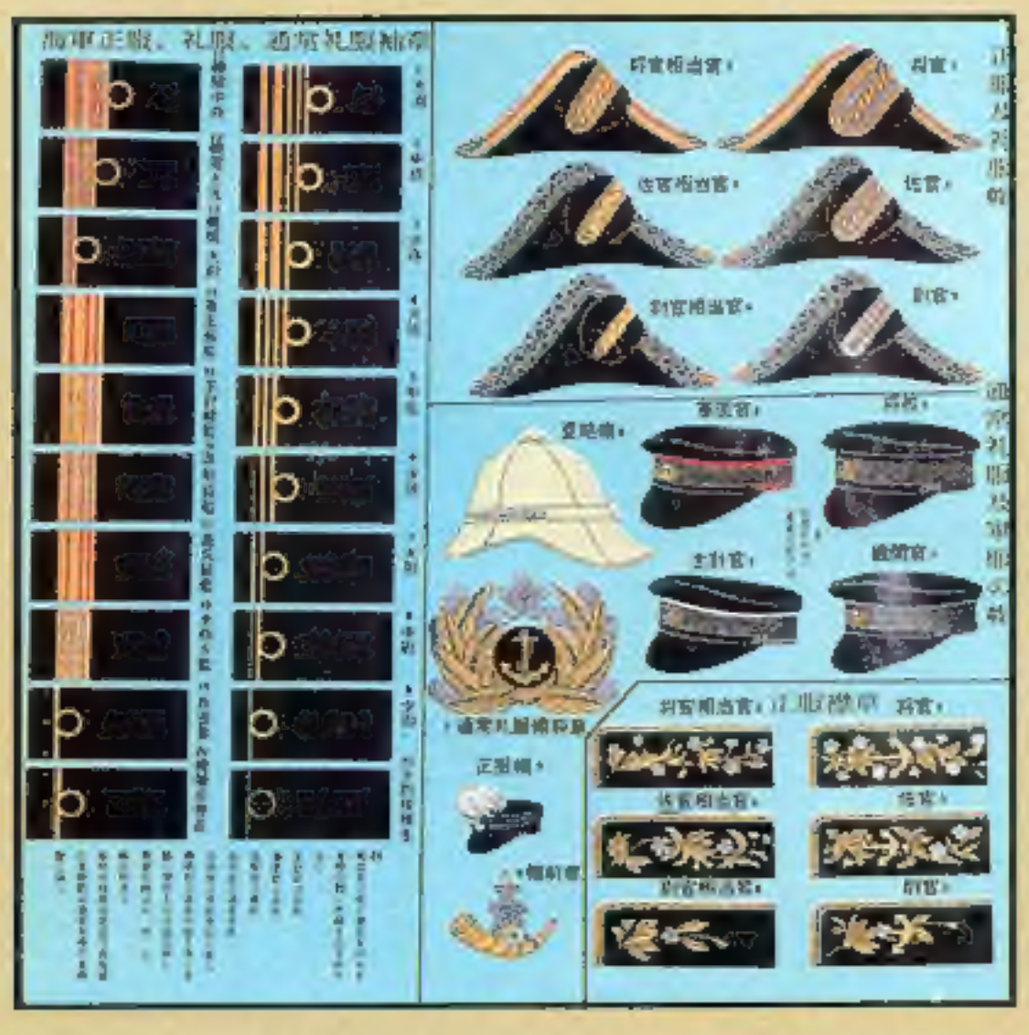
ARMÉE JAPONAISE EN MANDCHOURIE
1900-1910



Uniformes de la Marine. 1/36. Épaulettes.

Uniformes de la Marine : 1. Veste d'uniforme réglementaire. 2/3. Veste de cérémonie : dos et face. 4/5. Veste de parade : dos et face. 6/7. Veste d'uniforme réglementaire : dos et face. 8/9. Uniforme d'été. 10/13. Pantalons. 14/15. Uniforme ordinaire d'aspirant. 16. Uniforme de matelot. 17. Uniforme d'été de matelot. 18/19. Veste de maître ; dos et face. 20 (21/23). Uniforme de la musique.

Uniformes de la Marine : 1/21 (à gauche). Galons d'uniformes de cérémonie et de parade. 1/6 (en haut). Bicornes d'uniforme de cérémonie et de parade. 1/8 (au milieu). Coiffures militaires (bord relevé en été). 1/6 (dessous). Écussons de col.



MATELOTS

MOUKDEN
MANDCHOURIE
FÉV. 1905

CAUCASIEN
DE TEREK
ENRÔLÉ DANS LES BATAILLONS
SIBÉRIENS

GÉORGIENS DE KASBEK

SOLDATS RUSSES DE L'ARMÉE
IMPÉRIALE D'ORIENT

DANSEUR
DE LESCHINSKA

DÉSOLÉ DE VOUS DÉRANGER À CETTE HEURE... JE CROYAIS TROUVER LÀ MON AMI CORTO !
AH, MONSIEUR LONDON... CORTO MALTESE EST ALLÉ ACCOMPAGNER MA NIÈCE, IL DEVAIT ENSUITE SE RENDRE CHEZ SON AMI TONG.
TONG ? JE NE CONNAIS PAS... JE CHERCHE CORTO DEPUIS HIER, EN VAIN...
TONG EST MAÎTRE DE KUNG-FU !
CES DERNIERS TEMPS, JE NE FAIS QUE RENCONTRER DES GENS TRÈS VERSÉS DANS LES ARTS MARTIAUX ! QUEL PAYS !

PORTRAIT DU MARIN ADOLESCENT

La premiere allusion à Corto Maltese figure dans le livre *Port-Arthur* de l'amiral Nagumo, dans la documentation annexe publiee aux Editions Fayard, à Paris, en 1913
Le texte etait le suivant : «A l'amiral Nagumo : Les plus severes mesures de securite et de vigilance ont ete prises à l'egard de l'ecrivain nord-americain Jack London durant ses activites en tant que correspondant de guerre en premiere ligne a Port-Arthur Son comportement a suscité divers problemes, etant donne qu'il exprime, sans la moindre retenue, ses opinions dans les cercles de nos officiers, parmi lesquels il compte plusieurs amis L'attitude de London est inqualifiable : non content d'afficher ses idees socialistes, du reste patentes dans son oeuvre litteraire, il defend en outre la presence nord-americaine dans le Pacifique, dans la mesure ou elle constitue un obstacle a notre legitime expansion. Il soutient que, tôt ou tard, le Japon et les Etats-Unis se feront inévitablement la guerre pour s'assurer le contrôle de l'immense marche chinois. L'ambiguite de son comportement nous porte a ne voir en lui qu'un ecrivain aventurier, et non un agent secret comme le voudraient certaines declarations des autres correspondants etrangers. Un ultime et grave incident, qui causa la mort d'un de nos officiers, a amene le Commandant du Front a decreter l'expulsion de London hors de la zone de combat Il compte parmi ses amis un jeune marin, certainement italien, qui voyage avec un passeport britannique. Son nom est Corto Maltese et, malgre son âge, il possede de nombreuses relations dans les milieux chinois et mandchou Nous pensons qu'il s'agit d'un agent anglais, etant donne que son signalement correspond a celui d'un mousse qui prit une part active a la bataille de Pekin, en 1900, lors de la revolte des Boxers
Vu que nous le considerons comme un danger potentiel pour nos interets, nous recommandons que ses coordonnees soient communiquees aux attaches militaires de nos ambassades.
Major Ukeda. Responsable de l'Information militaire du front Port-Arthur, 1905.» (Archives generales de Kempeitai Service d'Information militaire du Japon) (1)
Une autre reference parfaitement documentee evoque, bien que posterieure, une periode anterieure a celle de Port-Arthur Concretement, on a pu etablir que Corto figure dans un des deux livres de souvenirs ecrits par Joseph Conrad. Le Capitaine de la marine marchande britannique et ex-Polonais Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski ecrivit en effet dans *A personal Record*, alors qu'il etait deja un auteur internationalement renomme : «Durant ma derniere annee de navigation, je commandai le *Osborn*, un caboteur qui effectuait la traversee Australie Angleterre Il m'en coûta beaucoup de voir se terminer ma vie d'homme de mer Comme tous les anciens, j'eprouvai l'impetueux besoin de communiquer a un autre tout ce que je savais. Un jeune marin d'origine maltaise devint mon disciple attentif : le jeune qui possede la sagesse parce qu'il ne cherche pas à comprendre le monde mais à le transformer - et ses conseils avec me convainquirent de rediger mes memoires sous forme de recits. Les annees pas

sant, ce jeune homme allait devenir un des meilleurs marins que j'aie jamais connus, ainsi qu'un excellent ami.» (2) Le rapprochement avec le nom de James Joyce, lui, est plus tardif. En 1909, l'écrivain irlandais séjourne à Trieste. Corto, informé par la lettre d'un ami commun, le syndicaliste Connaly, va aider cet homme délicat, myope et timide, incapable d'un propos vulgaire devant une dame, même si, tous les soirs, il l'incite à courir les bordels en sa compagnie

Le quatrième document que l'on possède sur la jeunesse de Corto relate un fait peu connu de la biographie de son ami John Reed. «En 1910, Corto était officier en second sur le *S. S Bostonian*, un bâtiment réservé au transport des bestiaux et qui reliait Boston à Liverpool. Au cours d'un des voyages, deux étudiants nord-américains, Reed et Pierce, s'enrôlerent comme mousses. Devant la rudesse du travail, le second déserta, préférant effectuer la traversée sur un bateau de ligne Mais sa disparition, dont on s'avisa alors que l'on voguait déjà en haute mer, valut à John Reed l'accusation d'homicide, étant donné que, dans la cabine qu'ils partageaient, on retrouva les papiers et l'argent de Pierce. Corto n'eut de cesse qu'il réussît à apprendre de Reed la manière dont les choses s'étaient réellement passées. Aussitôt, il mobilisa par la voie de navires plus rapides, ses amis en Angleterre, si bien que, lorsque Reed comparut devant la Cour de Manchester pour répondre du meurtre, Corto put produire dans la salle du tribunal le sieur Pierce en personne qu'il était, entre-temps, parvenu à retrouver. Pour le sévère capitaine du *Bostonian*, la confusion tourna au ridicule, et Reed fut remis en liberté. Quant à Corto, l'aventure lui valut à la fois de perdre son emploi et d'être couché sur la liste noire de la «mafia» des capitaines. Mais il y gagna un ami. Il cessa de naviguer sur les bâtiments yankees pour se lancer dans les trafics de contrebande entre les Antilles et le Brésil. (3)

Hugo Pratt, dans son travail de recherche sur la biographie de Corto Maltese, a publié dans la revue *(A SUIVRE)* (n°S 51,52 et 53) et dans *L'Eternauta* , (n°S 1-9) un chapitre dans lequel il reconstitue une partie de la jeunesse du marin maltais en se basant sur les souvenirs de Jack London. Ce chapitre est d'une grande importance pour les enthousiastes de cette saga, puisqu'il raconte la naissance de la grande amitié entre Corto et Raspoutine qui, amorcée en Mandchourie en 1905, atteindra son apogée dix-sept ans plus tard, lorsque Corto risquera sa peau pour sauver l'excentrique Sibérien d'une prison à Samarcande.

L'histoire à travers les images. Cette série fait partie de la célèbre collection publiée dans les années trente par la Gran Fábrica de Chocolates Juncosa, fundada en 1835. Proveedor de la Real Casa.

EL MIKADO MUTSUHITO

ALMIRANTE TOGO

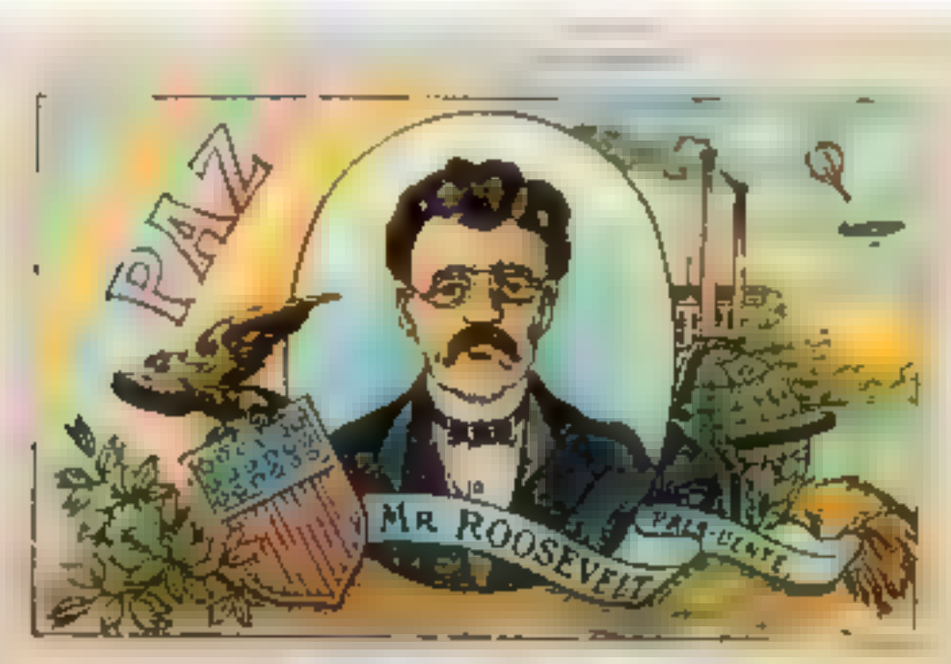
KOUROPATKINE

O YH. OKU.O

MARISCAL OYAMA

ALMIRANTE ROGESTVENSKI

EL BARÓN M WITHE
1905
EL BARON KOMURA


PAZ
MR ROOSEVELT

L'année 1905 fut une année décisive pour la civilisation européenne (si l'on peut appeler civilisation l'avènement du fascisme, du stalinisme et des camps de concentration). Durant tout le siècle précédent, l'Homme blanc exalté par Kipling avait porté à son plus haut degré d'expansion cet échange commercial à l'échelle mondiale que l'on nomme le colonialisme. Mais en 1905 deux faits importants vont signer la fin du Vieux Monde : la défaite des Russes blancs par les jaunes japonais et l'insurrection d'Odessa. A partir de ces deux événements, le monde va changer, et nous avons en Corto Maltese un témoin du premier.

Hugo Pratt nous livre un récit dont la figure centrale est Jack London et, à l'occasion d'une périlleuse aventure des deux personnages, nous raconte la rencontre de Raspoutine et de Corto. Cette histoire constitue une petite anecdote que Pratt raconte en privilégiant le portrait des personnages et la description du milieu par rapport à l'action. Le marin adolescent est présenté, à la fin de cette première partie du récit, avec une dose d'imperturbabilité et de bon sens peu commune chez un garçon de cet âge. En effet, tout cet imbroglio entre London et Sakaï n'est rien d'autre qu'un ballon, qui eût été dégonflé bien avant que d'éclater par un état-major japonais peu soucieux de créer un incident avec la presse internationale. Mais une loi générale veut que, lorsque surgit un problème dans lequel on se trouve personnellement embringué, les intéressés ont tendance à ignorer les circonstances susceptibles de résoudre la situation à leur place et bien mieux qu'eux-mêmes.

Sakaï en son violent orgueil et London en son détachement oublient qu'ils ne sont pas libres de se mouvoir selon leur bon plaisir et qu'ils sont contraints d'accepter les règles du jeu que d'autres établissent pour eux à l'échelon supérieur. Pour brosser le portrait de Corto adolescent, l'auteur présente en premier plan d'autres personnages qui, à travers ce qu'ils font et ce qu'ils disent, fournissent des indications sur la personnalité du marin de Malte. L'assassin Raspoutine, avec son sens particulier de l'âme, traverse la vie de Corto Maltese auquel il survivra (4) et auquel il sera toujours reconnaissant de ce premier coup de main qui lui permit de s'échapper de Moukden. On trouve déjà dans le portrait de ce très jeune homme les principales caractéristiques de la personnalité de Corto : une apparente indifférence qu'il transforme en stoïcisme, du bon sens, une habileté à

Japonais prisonniers des Russes.

Tranchée japonaise à Heikutai, octobre 1904.

Au-dessus : Armée japonaise en Mandchourie.
Dessous : Une batterie de montagne russe à Girin, en Mandchourie, durant la guerre russo-japonaise.

Une vignette de satire politique tirée de l'hebdomadaire *L'assiette au beurre*, n° 184 du 8 octobre 1904

convaincre... et des relations. Pour Corto, l'amitié est une des rares choses qui comptent et il se ferait des amis jusqu'en enfer. Graphiquement, Pratt continue à composer ses tableaux dans son style traditionnel. Chaque fois, il réduit le trait, simplifiant les lignes et usant des ombres pour donner du volume. Pratt est Pratt et, pour moi, le meilleur narrateur de bande dessinée qui soit. Son sens de l'équilibre, l'emploi de plans «muets» alternant avec des séquences actives ou explicatives, sont une véritable merveille descriptive, telle la première page qui ouvre le livre. Son talent de conteur s'apparente à celui de John Ford. Les histoires qu'il raconte captivent dès le départ et il apporte un soin tout particulier à définir les personnages secondaires, esquissés donnent consistance et crédibilité au récit. Et il faut encore souligner un point : avant de narrer une histoire, Pratt étudie l'Histoire à fond et, ensuite, s'efforce de faire passer ces informations de façon aussi brève qu'indirecte afin que à la lecture toutes les cartes se mettent en place.

La présente aventure de Corto met en scène, entre Russes et Japonais, à un moment où, désormais, le conflit touche à sa fin, un affrontement qui ne serait pas compréhensible si un journaliste ne faisait allusion au fait que le général Kouropatine poursuit la résistance avec ses troupes alors même que le reste des forces russes a déjà accepté le cessez-le-feu. N'importe quel auteur de bande dessinée omettrait cette explication comme superflue pour centrer la relation uniquement sur les personnages principaux. Pratt non ! Il sait que la «réalité» du récit n'est possible que lorsqu'on en livre toutes les clefs et c'est la vraisemblance de ce qu'il avance qui rend crédible toute la saga de Corto.

Juan Antonio de Blas

Hisashi Naguno. Port Arthur. Paris, 1973, pp. 464 ss.

2. Joseph Conrad. *A Personal Record*. Flight Books. Londres, 1924, p. 262.

3. Hugo Pratt et Juan Antonio de Blas. *La saga de Corto Maltese*. A paraître prochainement aux éditions Milano Libri. Ces données sont tirées du livre non terminé de Louise Bryant, *Remember Red*. Manuscrit original déposé auprès de l'Université du Wisconsin.

4. Raspoutine, octogénaire, vivait en décembre 1960 près de la Barbade, ayant finalement eu de la chance, il était devenu millionnaire et propriétaire d'une île.
Ses souvenirs, dans lesquels Corto apparaît presque constamment, furent rédigés par Cain Grosvenore qui, par la suite, allait aider Hugo Pratt. Le titre de ces Mémoires encore inédites est *Je ne suis pas n'importe qui*.

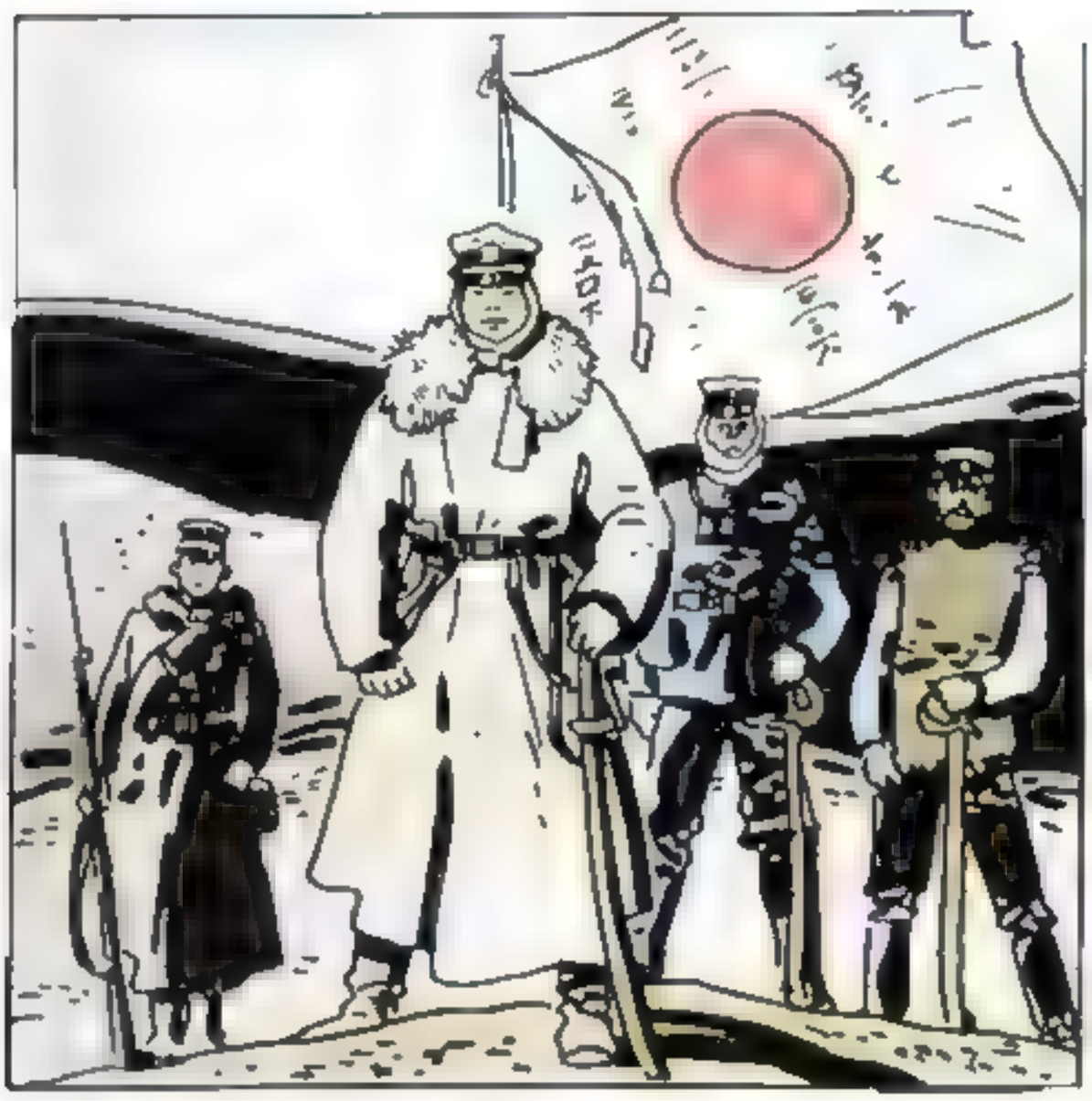
C'EST LUI TON AMI ?
OUI, C'EST LUI...

... ET QUI VA MAINTENANT DEVENIR LE TIEN, MISTER RASPOUTINE.

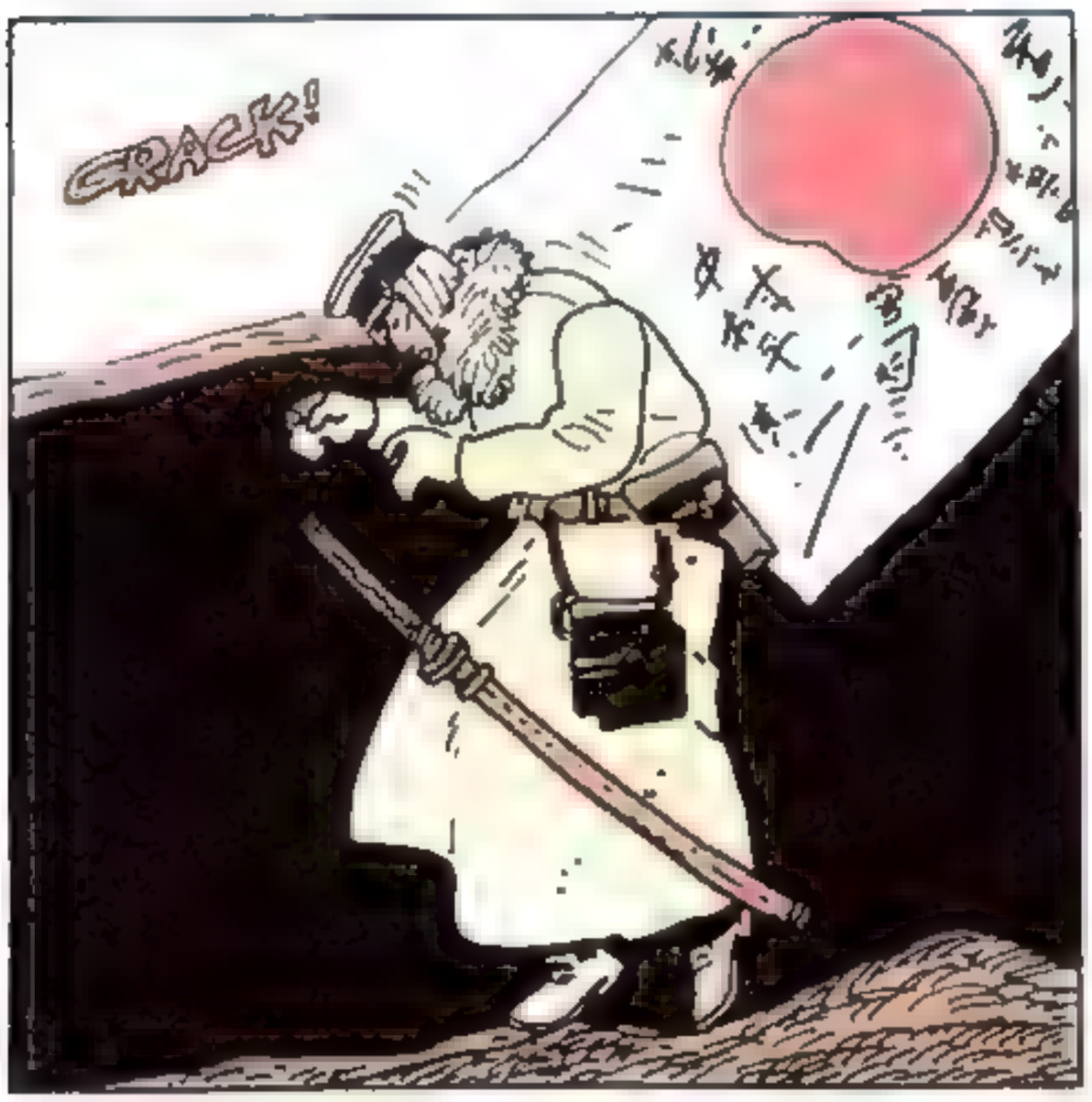
HUGO PRATT

EN 1904-1905, PENDANT LA GUERRE RUSSO-JAPONAISE, J'AI FAIT LA CONNAISSANCE DE JACK LONDON ET J'AI RENCONTRÉ RASPOUTINE POUR LA PREMIÈRE FOIS. DEUX HOMMES D'UN COURAGE EXTRAORDINAIRE. J'ÉTAIS TRÈS JEUNE À L'ÉPOQUE ET JE NE M'EN SUIS PAS RENDU COMPTE, MAIS AUJOURD'HUI JE PEUX VOUS RACONTER DEUX OU TROIS CHOSES À LEUR SUJET QUE JE N'AVAIS PAS ENCORE COMPRISES.

PFFiiiiiiiiii!



LISTEN! THE WHISTLE WE WERE WAITING FOR... THE WAR IS OVER!


CRACK!

THE WAR IS OVER!
I DIDN'T SIGN ANY ARMISTICE! NOBODY ASKED ME ABOUT IT!

CRACK!

CRACK!

PFFFFFFFFFFF!

PFFFFFFFFFFF!

WHO FIRED THAT SHOT? WHO'S THE MANIAC?

IT CAME FROM THE SIBERIAN UNIT, SIR!

DAMNED SWINE! WHO'S SHOOTING?

YOU DID? DIDN'T YOU HEAR THE WHISTLE?

I DON'T GIVE A CRAP ABOUT THE BLASTED WHISTLE! I DIDN'T ASK TO BE IN THIS WAR.

HOW DARE YOU TALK TO ME LIKE THIS?

I HAVE DECIDED TO INDULGE IN EVERYTHING ...

EVERYTHING... TWELVE TIMES OVER!

THIS IS *MUTINY!*

SIBERIAN SWINE! I COULD KILL YOU FOR THIS. YOUR LIFE'S NOT WORTH A KOPECK.

WE'LL SEE ABOUT THAT!

BANG!

CRACK!

MY GOD!

SO THERE! NO MORE ORDERS FOR HIM!

WHAT?

VASSILI... WANT TO COME WITH ME?

BUT... I...

YOU WHAT?

I'M... SCARED.

SCARED? YOU FOOL!

WHAT'S HAPPENING? WHO KILLED THE CAPTAIN?

SO... HOW DID HE DIE?

I DID IT!

BANG!

CRACK!

I KILLED HIM... I KILLED HIM!

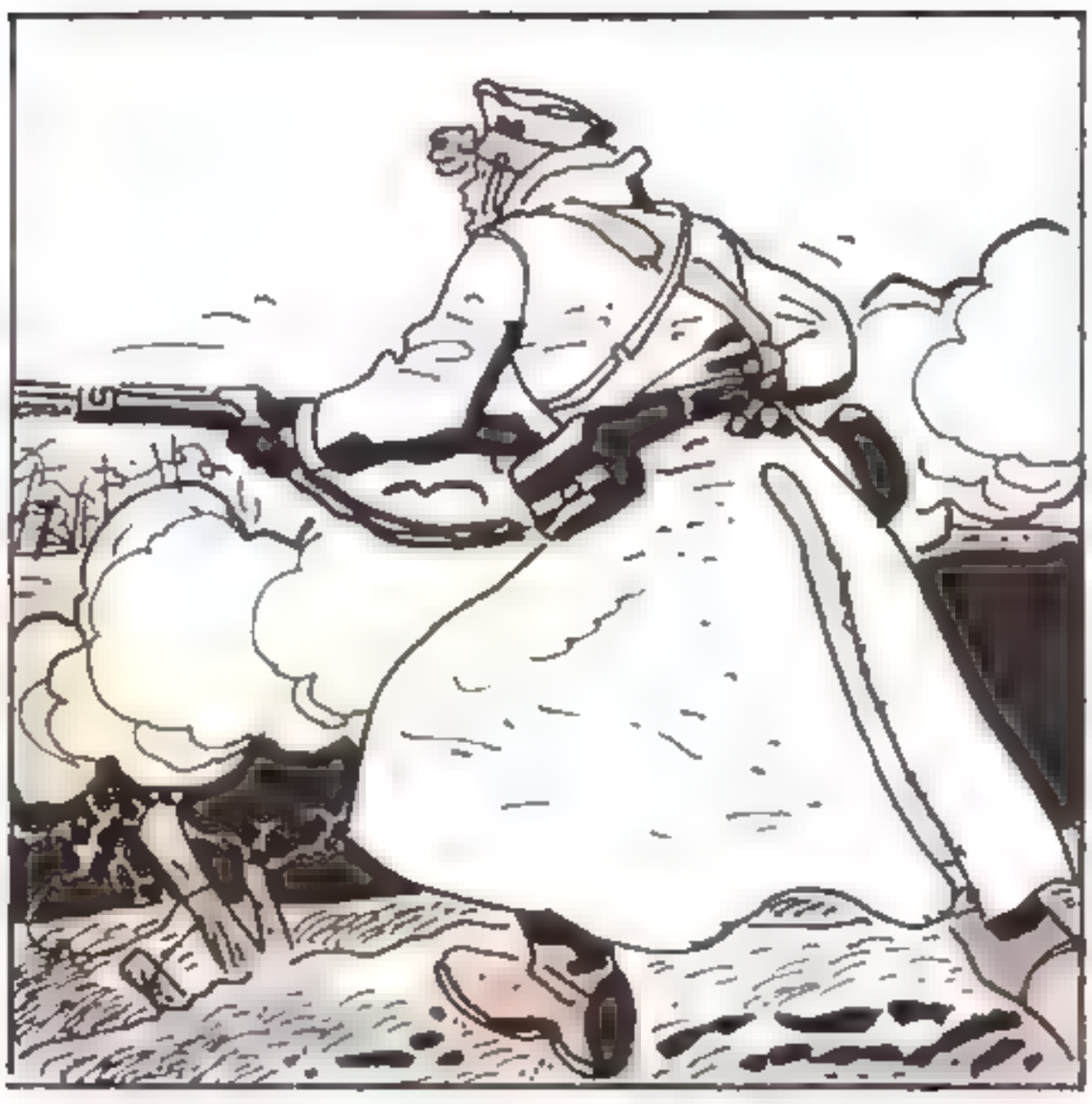
LET'S SCRAM!

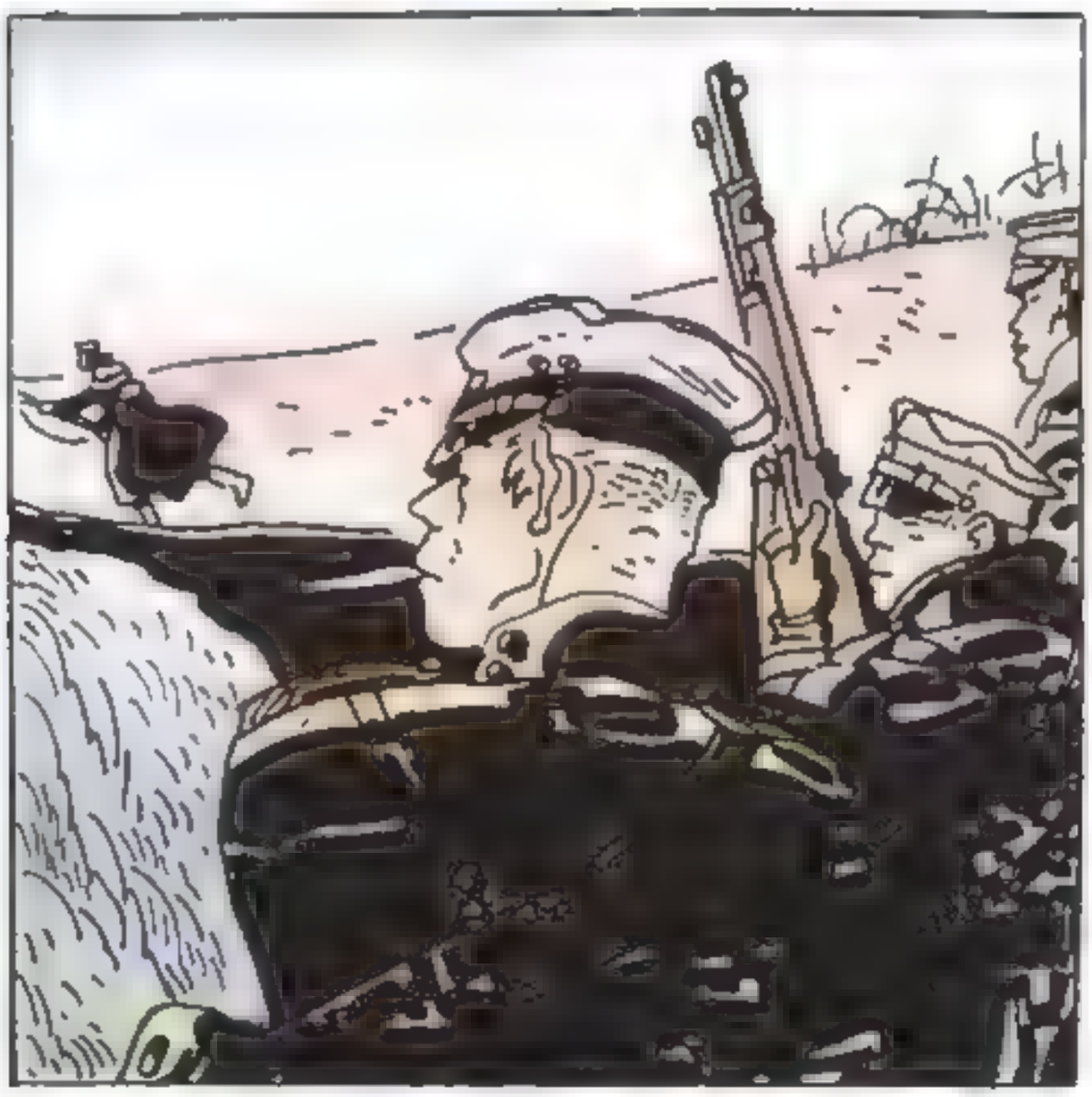
THE BASTARD HIT ME... NOTHING SERIOUS...

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

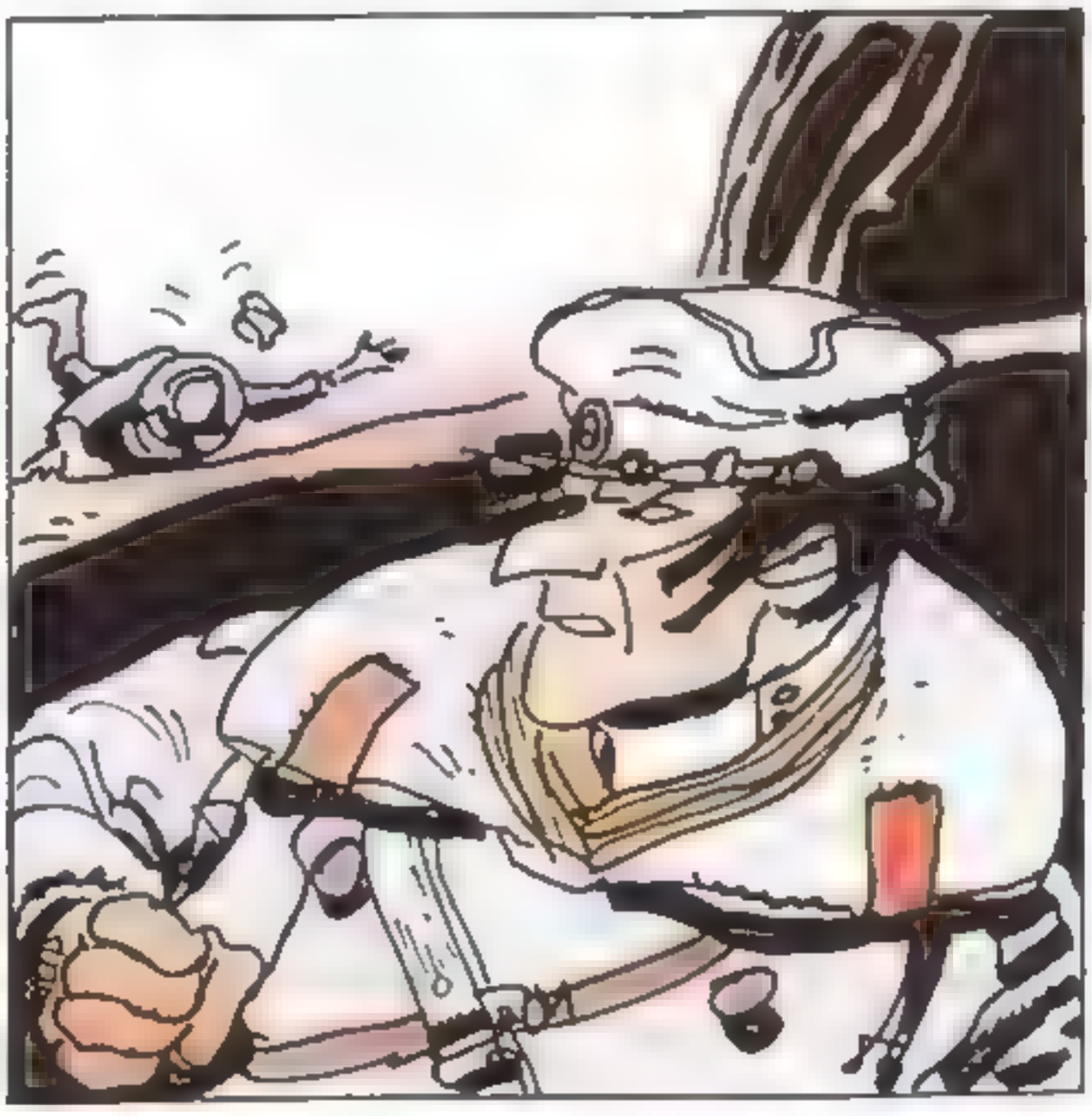
WHERE ARE WE GOING? TOWARDS LIFE... COME ON, DIMWIT!

YEAH! TOWARDS LIFE...





DON'T MISS HIM!



THE IDIOT LET HIMSELF BE KILLED!

IN THIS DIRECTION I'LL MEET JAPANESE TROOPS WHO'LL HAND ME OVER TO THE RUSSIANS.

...I'D BETTER THINK THIS OVER.

I HAVE TO FIND AN ANGLE BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE. THE WAR IS OVER AND THEY'RE ALL BUDDIES AGAIN.

ALL OF THEM EXCEPT THE ONES WHO REBEL LIKE ME. FOR US, THEY'LL JUST PUT A WALL BEHIND US AND FOUR MARKSMEN IN FRONT.

...

I HAVE TO GO TOWARD THE COAST... IF I CAN GET TO PORT ARTHUR, I'M SAVED.

A MAN LIKE ME CANNOT BE A PAWN OF FATE. I'M NO FATALIST.

WITH THIS JAPANESE UNIFORM, IT'LL BE EASIER TO GO THROUGH THEIR LINES.

DAMN... THOSE NIPS ARE TOO SMALL...

IN THE EUPHORIA OF VICTORY, THE JAPANESE CHECKS MIGHT BE LESS STRICT.

IN THIS OUTFIT...

...THEY SHOULDN'T EVEN NOTICE ME...

HEY. YOU!!!

THEY'VE SPOTTED ME!

STOP!

WHAT DOES HE WANT? I DON'T KNOW HIM!

HEY... DON'T...

BANG!

BANG!

WHO'S SHOOTING NOW?

IT CAME FROM OVER THERE!

THIS OFFICER KILLED TWO SOLDIERS!

HE FLED THAT WAY...

WE ARE LOOKING FOR AN OFFICER WHO KILLER TWO SOLDIERS...

WHAT SHOULD I WRITE ABOUT THIS?

WRITE WHAT YOU WANT, MR LONDON.... THERE HAVE BEEN SO MANY DEATHS ALREADY...

TWO MORE OR LESS WILL NOT TARNISH OUR SPLENDID VICTORY OVER THE RUSSIANS. WRITE, KEEP WRITING, MY DEAR FRIEND!

MEN! CIVILIAN OBSERVERS AND FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS INVITED BY OUR GENERAL COMMAND ARE HERE.

...

...YOU CANNOT STAY HERE! IF IT'S TRUE THAT AN OFFICER HAD TO TAKE CARE OF TWO SOLDIERS, HE MUST HAVE HAD SOME VERY PRECISE REASONS TO DO SO.

NOW GO!

BEING A SOLDIER IN YOUR ARMY IS NOT VERY REASSURING.

HMMM...

BEING A SOLDIER IS NEVER REASSURING UNDER ANY FLAG. YOU SEE, MY DEAR LONDON, TODAY JAPAN AND THE USA ARE FRIENDS, BUT TOMORROW WHEN THEY BOTH TRAIN THEIR EYES ON THE CHINESE MARKET, THERE WILL BE WAR...

TODAY WE HAVE TERMINATED A SERIOUS COMPETITOR: IMPERIAL RUSSIA. TOMORROW WE WILL ELIMINATE THE GERMANS FROM THE PACIFIC ISLANDS AND THEN IT WILL BE BETWEEN THE TWO OF US. THERE WILL BE MORE SOLDIERS ELIMINATED BY INCOMPETENT OFFICERS TELLING THEM OF FATHERLAND AND FLAG.

IT'S ALWAYS A MATTER OF PERSONAL GAIN...

YOU'RE A PESSIMIST, CAPTAIN SUTO, BUT YOU'RE RIGHT.

YES... WHAT CAN WE DO WHEN THE STAKES ARE SO HIGH...

HEY...YOU... YOU'RE STILL ALIVE!

YES... BUT YOU COULD DIE IN A FEW SECONDS

LISTEN... THE WAR IS OVER, WHAT DO YOU WANT?

I'M TRYING TO SURVIVE. IT'S AS IF EVERYONE WANTS TO PUNISH ME...

FOR A CRIME I DID NOT COMMIT... AND I HAVE DECIDED NOT TO LET THEM!

I'VE HAD TO KILL TO GET HERE ALREADY... I COULD KEEP AT IT TO GO FURTHER.

O.K., UNDERSTOOD!

FOLOW ME. I'LL FIND YOU A HIDEOUT FOR A COUPLE OF DAYS. IT'LL BE A LOT OF WORK TO BURN ALL THOSE CORPSES... AND NO ONE WILL BE LOOKING FOR YOU.

WE ARE CUT FROM OUR ARMY AND PRISONERS OF THE JAPANESE.

YEAH, I SEE! WE'RE SURROUNDED BY JAPANESE!

THERE... YOU'LL STAY IN THIS SHED. YOU'LL BE SAFE HERE.

I'LL GO AND TALK TO SOMEBODY WHO MIGHT BE ABLE TO HELP YOU. DON'T GO AWAY!

OK, BUT HURRY.

I WONDER IF I'LL REALLY BE ABLE TO ESCAPE.

THE RUSSIAN ARMY IS REBELLING AND THE SOLDIERS ARE SCATTERING.

I SHOULD JOIN THEM

I MAY BE ABLE TO FIND OTHER FRIENDS FROM THE SIBERIAN UNITS AROUND MUKDEN.

A LITTLE TEA WILL WARM US.

HI, MY NAME IS LONDON.

AH...

AND HE BELONGS TO THE JAPANESE GENERAL STAFF. WILL YOU OFFER US A CUP OF TEA?

I DON' UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'RE SAYING. I'D LIKE TO REMAIN ALONE.

WHAT A LOVEABLE GUY! ARE YOU WITH THE TEAMS OF CIVILIANS WHO CLEAR AWAY THE CORPSES?

FINE. IF YOU DON'T WANT TO ANSWER, IT'S YOUR BUSINESS...

ACTUALLY, IT IS NOT MERELY HIS BUSINESS... THIS MAN IS NOT FROM MY TEAM, BUT HE WEARS THE UNIFORM OF A JAPANESE MAJOR.

WHERE DID YOU STEAL THAT JAPANESE IMPERIAL ARMY OFFICER JACKET?

YOU ARE EITHER A STUPID HOOLIGAN... OR A RUSSIAN DESERTER.

LET'S SEE...

SOME TIME AGO ONE OF OUR PATROLS WAS LOOKING FOR AN OFFICER WHO MURDERED HIS OWN SOLDIERS...

MIGHT THAT ASSASSIN OFFICER BE...*YOU* BY ANY CHANCE?

EXPLAIN YOURSELF!

HOLD IT! THE FACT THAT HE WEARS ONE OF YOUR UNIFORMS DOESN'T MEAN THAT HE'S THE MAN YOU'RE LOOKING FOR.

DO NOT BE SO NAIVE, LONDON.

I CAN'T LET THIS SUSPICIOUS CHARACTER ESCAPE JUST BECAUSE YOU LIKE RUSSIANS.

IF YOU ARE NOT THE ONE WE ARE LOOKING FOR, THEN YOU HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR... YOU LOOK LIKE AN ORIENTAL RUSSIAN.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

DOG.. TRAITOR...

YOU SOLD ME OUT TO THE JAPANESE! DAMN YOU!

SMACK!

SOCK!

MY GOD! THIS POOR GUY WILL BE BLINDED FOR LIFE.

WHY IN HELL DID YOU DO THIS?

BECAUSE HE BETRAYED ME.

BETRAYED? WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

HE SENT YOU HERE TO CAPTURE ME.

NOT AT ALL. WE CAME HERE BY CHANCE. THIS POOR GUY DIDN'T DO ANYTHING.

HMMM... THAT WOULD MEAN THAT I WAS MISTAKEN.

WELL, ANYBODY CAN MAKE MISTAKES. ANYWAY, I DIDN'T LIKE THIS GUY.

I DON'T LIKE YOU EITHER. NOW YOU'LL FOLLOW ME TO THE MILITARY POLICE...

...I'M SURE WE'LL LEARN A LOT ABOUT YOU. AT THE FIRST SUPICIOUS MOVE, I'LL BLOW YOUR BRAINS OUT. LET'S GO!

A GUY LIKE ME SHOULDN'T SURRENDER TO A "RATFACE" LIKE YOURS!

YOU'LL DO IT BECAUSE YOU WANT TO LIVE! NOW, GO!

WHY DIDN'T YOU KILL ME RIGHT AWAY?

WHY? BECAUSE I WANT TO KEEP YOU ALIVE...

...FOR THE MILITARY POLICE... IT IS MORE INTERESTING FOR ME THAN TO SHOOT YOU UNARMED.

AND THEN MAYBE YOU'LL BE ABLE TO ESCAPE.

WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

RASPUTIN.

SEE YOU TONIGHT AT HEADQUARTERS, LONDON. I'LL BE SENDING A MEDIC FOR THE WOUNDED MAN.

COURAGE, MY FRIEND. THE DOCTOR WILL SOON BE HERE. IT COULD HAVE BEEN WORSE.

HERE ARE THE MEDICS. THEY'LL TAKE YOU TO A MILITARY HOSPITAL.

THANK YOU.

THIS WAR IS OVER... I MIGHT AS WELL GO HOME...

...TO THE STATES. I'D LIKE TO KNOW WHETHER CORTO DECIDED TO COME TO CALIFORNIA WITH ME.

HEY TOM, DO YOU KNOW WHERE CORTO IS?

HE'S AT HIS JAPANESE FRIEND'S PLACE.

SAY LONDON, EVER HEARD OF KING SOLOMON'S MINES?

YEAH, IT'S AN AFRICAN NOVEL BY H. RIDER HAGGARD. I LIKE "SHE" OR "THE WITCH'S HEAD" BETTER.

...BUT HIS MAIN OPUS IS "RURAL ENGLAND."

WELL... THANKS FOR THE BIO, LONDON... AND AFTER THAT BIT OF SHOWING OFF, I'LL ASK AGAIN: WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT KING SOLOMON'S MINES?

SOLOMON, KING OF ISRAEL, OWNED GOLD MINES IN OPHIR NEAR THE KINGDOM OF SHEBA. THE QUEEN OF SHEBA, OR SABA, HIS GOOD FRIEND, OFFERED HIM 200 GOLD TAELS TO BUILD THE TEMPLE IN JERUSALEM.

THE KINGDOM OF OPHIR IS THOUGHT TO BE IN EITHER INDIA OR AFRICA.

THE KINGDOM OF SHEBA WOULD CORRESPOMD TO ARABIA AND THE HORN OF AFRICA. WHY DO YOU ASK?

WELL... SINCE YESTERDAY NIGHT, YOUR FRIEND CORTO MALTESE HAS GOT US ALL WOUND UP OVER A TALE OF GOLD MINES LOST BETWEEN DANKALIA AND ETHIOPIA

KID'S WHIMS...

MAYBE, BUT HE'S ASKED US TO FINANCE HIS SEARCH FOR THESE MINES.

...HE OFFERED US A SHARE OF THE FUTURE BENEFITS OF THIS ENTERPRISE AND SHOWED US THE MAPS OF A TURKISH OFFICER.

WHAT DID YOU TELL HIM?

WE WENT FOR IT. WE TRUST HIM... YOU KNOW THE BOY. YOU CAN NEVER SAY NO TO HIM.

I DON'T DOUBT IT.

IN SPITE OF HIS YOUTH, CORTO MALTESE HAS A CLEAR MIND.

WHICH HE INHERITED FROM HIS MOTHER.

..."LA NINA", A BEAUTIFUL GIBRALTAR GYPSY. SHE WAS THE FAVOURITE MODEL OF INGRES THE PAINTER. I DON'T KNOW IF HE INHERITED ANYTHING FROM HIS FATHER... HIS LOVE FOR THE SEA MAYBE, AND FOR LEGENDS... SINCE HE WAS A WELSH SAILOR.

BOOM!

BOOM!

RUSSIANS!

ISN'T THE WAR OVER?

YEAH, IT SHOULD BE...

DON'T THOSE GUNNERS KNOW?

THEY MUST BE SOLDIERS REBELLING. I'LL HAVE SOME TROUBLE GETTING OUT OF CHINA.

THESE REBELS ARE BEING PURSUED BY THE RUSSIAN AND THE JAPANESE ARMIES.

THOSE REBELS ARE RIGHT.

THEY WERE SENT HERE BLINDLY. THEY COULDN'T KNOW THAT THE NIPS...

...WERE BETTER PREPARED FOR THIS WAR. IN THE PAST I HAD A PREMONITION ABOUT AN ECONOMIC THREAT FROM THE JAPANESE. BUT NOW WE HAVE TO DREAD THE THREAT OF ASIAN MILITANTS.

RUSSIANS!

RUSSIANS?

RUSSIANS!

IT CAN'T BE!?!

BETTER GET OUT OF HERE!

RUSSIAN SNIPERS! TAKE COVER!

WE HAVE TO KNOW WHAT IS HAPPENING. WE ARE SPECIAL CORRESPONDENTS.

YOU HAVE TO OBEY. THIS IS NOT AMERICA.

LIEUTENANT, WE COULD FILE A COMPLAINT WITH OUR OFFICIAL DELEGATE IN TOKYO, MR DAVIS.

SCRAM!

YOU ARE ABUSING YOUR POWER, LIEUTENANT.

ONE OF MY SOLDIERS HAS DIED BECAUSE OF YOU ...

...THE ONE WHO CAME TO WARN YOU OF THE SNIPER'S PRESENCE. NOW *GO AWAY!*

FOR YOU ARROGANT WESTERNERS THERE COULD BE MORE THAN...

...STRAY RUSSIAN SHOTS!

DON'T WORRY, TOM. THE LIEUTENANT JUST SHOWED YOU WHAT THE BUSHIDO CODE OF HONOR IS!

A LESSON IN "ETHICS" FROM AN AMERICAN SUCH AS *YOU*, LONDON, MAKES ME LAUGH.

AH!!

LIEUTENANT... AT COLUMBIA WITH FELIX ADLER...

STOP IT, YOU HYPOCRITE.

IF YOU REALLY ARE THE ONE YOU PRETEND TO BE, THERE'S ONE WAY TO PROVE IT AND YOU KNOW HOW.

I THINK YOU ARE FULL OF HOT AIR. AND FURTHERMORE ...

I DON'T LIKE YOUR NOVELS, MR LONDON,

GOOD, LIEUTENANT.

I WOULDN'T STOOP TO PLEASE YOU.

WHITES ARE SWINE

I'M TRULY SORRY, LONDON. THIS LIEUTENANT GOT MAD AT YOU... BUT IT WAS ALL MY FAULT.

NAH! HE DIDN'T LIKE MY BOOKS.

ANYWAY, THIS LIEUTENANT DOESN'T SCARE ME.

YOU CANNOT FIGHT A PRO. HE'S A MARTIAL ARTS FANATIC.

YOU'RE RIGHT.

BUT I OFTEN HAD TO FACE TOUGH SITUATIONS, WITH GREEK ITALIAN AND CHINESE FISHERMEN, AND WITH OYSTER SMUGGLERS IN SAN FRANCISCO...

YOU CAN EASILY GET KILLED IN *THAT* HARBOR.

IN ALASKA, TOO, LIFE WAS CHEAP DURING THE GOLD RUSH, OR FACING DESPAIR AFTER A FAILED MARRAIGE... NO... THIS LIEUTENANT DOESN'T SCARE ME!

HELLO LONDON! I HEARD YOU HAD AN ALTERCATION ...

...WITH LIEUTENANT SAKAI, WHO'S VERY FOND OF MARTIAL ARTS. DID YOU ACCEPT THE FIGHT?

I GUESS I DID.

FLAGRANT MISTAKE! YOU WILL PROBABLY LOSE... AND THE LIEUTENANT IS MEAN. HE'LL BREAK YOU EVEN BEFORE FIGHTING YOU.

I CAN ALSO BE MEAN.

YOU WON'T MAKE IT, LONDON. YOU'D BETTER LEAVE BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE.

MAY-BE.

I HAVE TO GO NOW. YOUR FRIENDS THE RUSSIANS KEEP FIGHTING AND ACTING NASTY.

I MAY SEE YOU IN MUKDEN TONIGHT. GOODBYE, LONDON.

WHO WAS THAT CAPTAIN?

BOOM! BOOM!

CAPTAIN SIBAUCHI.

SKRAPN! SKRAPN! SKRAPN!

WHAT THE HELL ARE THEY DOING? OUR OWN GUNNERS BOMBING US?

THOSE ARTILLERY BASTARDS ARE SHOOTING AT US. SOMEBODY ...

...GO AND WARN THEM ...DAMN!

GOOD LORD... CAPTAIN SIBAUCHI IS WOUNDED. I HAVE TO HELP HIM.

YOU CAN'T...

...YOU CAN'T HELP HIM. YOU HAVE TO STAY HERE. COME BACK.

BECAUSE OF YOU WE'LL LOSE OUR PASSES AS FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS.

ENOUGH, TOM. I CAN'T STAND YOU ANYMORE.

THIS MANIAC WILL HAVE US EXPELLED FROM THIS COUNTRY.

LONDON IS FULL OF CONTRADICTIONS. HE SAYS ONE THING AND DOES ANOTHER.

COURAGE CAPTAIN SIBAUCHI!

I CAN'T SEE!

CAPTAIN, COME QUICK. YOU CANNOT DO ANYTHING MORE.

LET'S GO... THOSE RUSSIANS ARE NOT SNIPERS, THEY ARE REINFORCEMENTS FROM MUKDEN.

NO... IT CAN'T BE... THE RUSSIANS SURREN-DERED.

PARTLY, CAPTAIN... PORT ARTHUR IS STILL RESISTING. PART OF THEM SURRENDERED; THE OTHER PART IS STILL FIGHTING.

ONE OF THE WHITE SWINE SAVED CAPTAIN SIBAUCHI.

WHAT? WHO IS THE WHITE MAN CARRYING CAPTAIN SIBAUCHI?

BOOM!

THE AMERICAN JOURNALIST, LONDON, LIEUTENANT SAKAI.

JACK LONDON?

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

MISTER LONDON, I WISH TO APOLOGIZE.

YOUR GESTURE TO CAPTAIN SIBAUCHI FORCES ME TO APOLOGIZE.

SIBAUCHI IS MY FRIEND.

I DID IT TO SAVE A FRIEND, NOT TO CATCH YOUR ATTENTION, LIEUTENANT SAKAI.

I DON'T NEED YOUR APOLOGIES, LIEUTENANT SAKAI. I HAVE OTHER THINGS ON MY MIND.

LONDON, WHAT CAME OVER YOU?

A LITTLE OF EVERY-THING.

ANY NEWS FROM JAPANESE HEAD-QUARTERS? WHAT ABOUT THE ARM-ISTICE?

NOTHING YET.

WE THOUGHT THE RUSSIANS HAD SURRENDERED. IN FACT ONLY GENERAL STAKELBERG HAS LAID ARMS. GENERAL KUROPATKIN OF THE NORTHERN ARMY IS STILL FIGHTING.

THEREFORE, PORT ARTHUR IS STILL RESISTING...

THE MOST AMAZING THING IS YOUR CHALLENGE TO LIEUTENANT SAKAI. THEY ARE ALL BETTING AGAINST YOU.

WHAT DO YOU RECOM-MEND?

I ASKED FOR YOUR IMMEDIATE TRANSFER.

REALLY? WHY? I DON'T UNDERSTAND.

YOU UNDERSTAND PERFECTLY. YOU GOT INVOLVED.

IN A WAR ACTION, AS A FOREIGNER AND A CIVILIAN OBSERVER, YOU WERE NOT ALLOWED TO DO IT, EVEN TO SAVE SOMEBODY'S LIFE.

PERSONALLY, WHATEVER LIEUTENANT SAKAI THINKS, I LIKE YOUR BOOKS.

I'D RATHER KEEP YOU ALIVE AND WRITING.

BOOM! BOOM!

HEY!

YOU AGAIN! YOU WERE ABLE TO ESCAPE?

HOW DID YOU ESCAPE CAPTAIN SUTTO?

WASN'T HARD...

I BEAT HIM AMD THREW HIM IN A TRENCH. HE MAY BE DEAD!

WHY DID YOU CALL ME? I COULD GIVE YOU AWAY.

"I COULD THIS, I COULD THAT..." JUST TRY. WE'LL SEE. I WANT TO LEAVE. CAN YOU HELP ME?

BOOM! BOOM!

MAYBE ...

MAYBE YOU COULD GET ON BOARD WITH MY FRIEND CORTO MALTESE.

WHO IS HE?

A YOUNG SAILOR. HE IS LEAVING SOON ON A MERCHANT VESSEL TO AFRICA. HE CAN HELP YOU.

HE'D BETTER. DID YOU SAY AFRICA? GOOD. ANYWHERE WILL BE BETTER THAN *HERE*.

I'M NOT SO SURE...

YOU WILL ALWAYS GET IN TROUBLE WHEREVER YOU ARE. YOU ARE A BORN ASSASSIN. BUT I HAVE NO RIGHT TO JUDGE YOU...

I'LL GO GET CORTO MALTESE.

GET SOME REST. AND YOU'D BETTER DESTROY THIS JAPANESE OFFICER'S JACKET.

TOCK! TOCK!

SOMEBODY KNOCKED?

MISTER LONDON, WE HAVE BEEN REQUESTED BY LIEUTENANT SAKAI...

...TO OFFICIALLY PRESENT HIS APOLOGIES. THROUGH A MOVE ACCORDING TOU OUR CODE OF HONOR...

...HE WANTS TO REAFFIRM HIS INTENTIONS. AFTER HAVING MADE COMMENTS THAT WERE UNCALLED FOR AGAINST YOU AND THE COUNTRY YOU REPRESENT, LIEUTENANT SAKAI...

...SENT US TO BRING YOU A PART OF HIMSELF... HOPING FOR YOUR FORGIVENESS.

LIEUTENANT KAZE...

MISTER LONDON... FROM LIEUTENANT SAKAI.

WHAT IS IT? A BOX OF CHOCOLATES?

HEAVENS!!

TELL LIEUTENANT SAKAI THAT I DEEPLY REGRET THIS MISUNDERSTANDING.

YES... BUT...

LIEUTENANT SAKAI WOULD LIKE TO SET THE MEETING.

PLEASE TELL US WHO YOUR WITNESS WILL BE FOR THE DUEL.

UNLESS YOU ACKNOWLEDGE THAT A JAPANESE IS "MORALLY" SUPERIOR TO ANY AMERICAN...

WHAT GARBAGE!

I COULD ACCEPT IT ON A PERSONAL LEVEL, BUT WHEN SOMEBODY EXPRESSES IT AS LIEUTENANT SAKAI DOES, ANYBODY FROM ANY NATIONALITY WOULD SEND HIM TO HELL.

I LET LIEUTENANT SAKAI CHOOSE THE TIME AND THE PLACE FOR OUR DUEL. YOU CAN TAKE THIS RELIC BACK WITH YOU.

I'M IN A HAIRY SITUATION WITH THIS JAPANESE OFFICER.

WHAT WAS IN THE BOX?

LIEUTENANT SAKAI'S PINKIE. JAPANESE MEMBERS OF CERTAIN SECTS CUT OFF ONE OF THEIR FINGERS WHEN THEY HAVE WRONGED SOMEBODY.

THIS SAKAI IS STRANGE. HE PRESENTS APOLOGIES, BUT HE WANTS TO WHIP MY ASS. NOW THIS DUEL HAS TO TAKE PLACE. WE CAN'T GO BACK.

WHAT'S IT TO YOU? JUST LEAVE.

WORDS, ALL WORDS. IT'S NOT THAT EASY. WHAT WOULD LOOK LIKE? I WRITE ADVENTURE STORIES SO I HAVE TO LIVE ADVENTUROUSLY.

HAW! HAW!

I THOUGH YOU WERE MORE INTELLIGENT. WHAT DOES COURAGE MEAN? YOU CAN'T PROGRAM IT.

I HAVE MET COWARDS THAT FEAR MADE COURAGEOUS.

MY MOTHER, THE WAY SHE LIVED, WAS MUCH MORE COURAGEOUS THAN YOU, THE JAPANESE LIEUTENANT AND MYSELF ARE.

OK, ENOUGH. I'M GOING TO SEE A FRIEND. YOU CAN DO WHAT YOU WANT...

BUT ...

...BUT IF YOU STAY YOU HAVE TO TRUST ME. DON'T GET ANY IDIOTIC IDEAS.

IT MAY BE AN ILLUSION, BUT THESE JAPANESE...

女
女

...ARE LOOKING AT ME LIKE I WAS A TERMINAL MORON.

I'LL PAY A VISIT TO CAPTAIN SIBAUCHI.

I HOPE HE'S NOT TOO GRAVELY HIT.

WHAT A MESS... CHINESE... RUSSIANS... JAPANESE...! THIS HOSPITAL HAS EVERYTHING.

HO'WRE YOU DOING, CAPTAIN SIBAUCHI? YOU LOOK GOOD.

LOST AN EYE, BUT THE REST IS OK... THANKS, LONDON.

I'M SORRY ABOUT YOUR EYE.

COULD HAVE BEEN WORSE... WHAT ABOUT THE "SAKAI AFFAIR"?

WELL...

WHY DON'T YOU GO? IT'S REALLY STUPID TO FIGHT FOR NO REASON. LIEUTENANT SAKAI IS A "BUDKA" A SPECIALIST OF MARTIAL ARTS.

HE'S A STUDENT OF THE "BUDDOKUKAI" WAR SCHOOL, AND ON TOP OF THAT, HE BELONGS TO A SECRET SOCIETY, THE *NINJA!*

A NINJA?

YES, A NINJA! ONE OF THOSE WARRIORS, MASTERS OF SPYING, OF MURDER, OF SABOTAGE AND MANY OTHER THINGS. THEY WERE FAMOUS BETWEEN THE 13TH & 17TH CENTURIES. IN A WAY...

...THEY ARE SAMURAI, CLASSLESS... UNDER THE ORDERS OF FEUDAL SHOGUNS. A NINJA IS NOT ONLY A SPECIALIST OF MARTIAL ARTS. HE TAKES GREAT CAR OF HIS BODY AND HIS MIND. STOIC BY NATURE AND SPARTAN BY EDUCATION.

GO AWAY, MY FRIEND, GO AS FAR AS YOU CAN!

...YOU CAN'T DO ANYTHING AGAINST A NINJA! FURTHERMORE, LIEUTENANT SAKAI ALSO COMES FROM THE FAMOUS SECRET SCHOOL OF KOGA. HE'S A "JUNIN", A MASTER.

OK, YOU'VE SCARED ME ENOUGH. I'M LEAVING, CAPTAIN.

I FEEL LIKE I'M BEING WATCHED...

AT NIGHT...

..YOU CAN MEET SOME STRANGE PEOPLE.

THESE TWO CHINESE ARE FOLLOWING ME!

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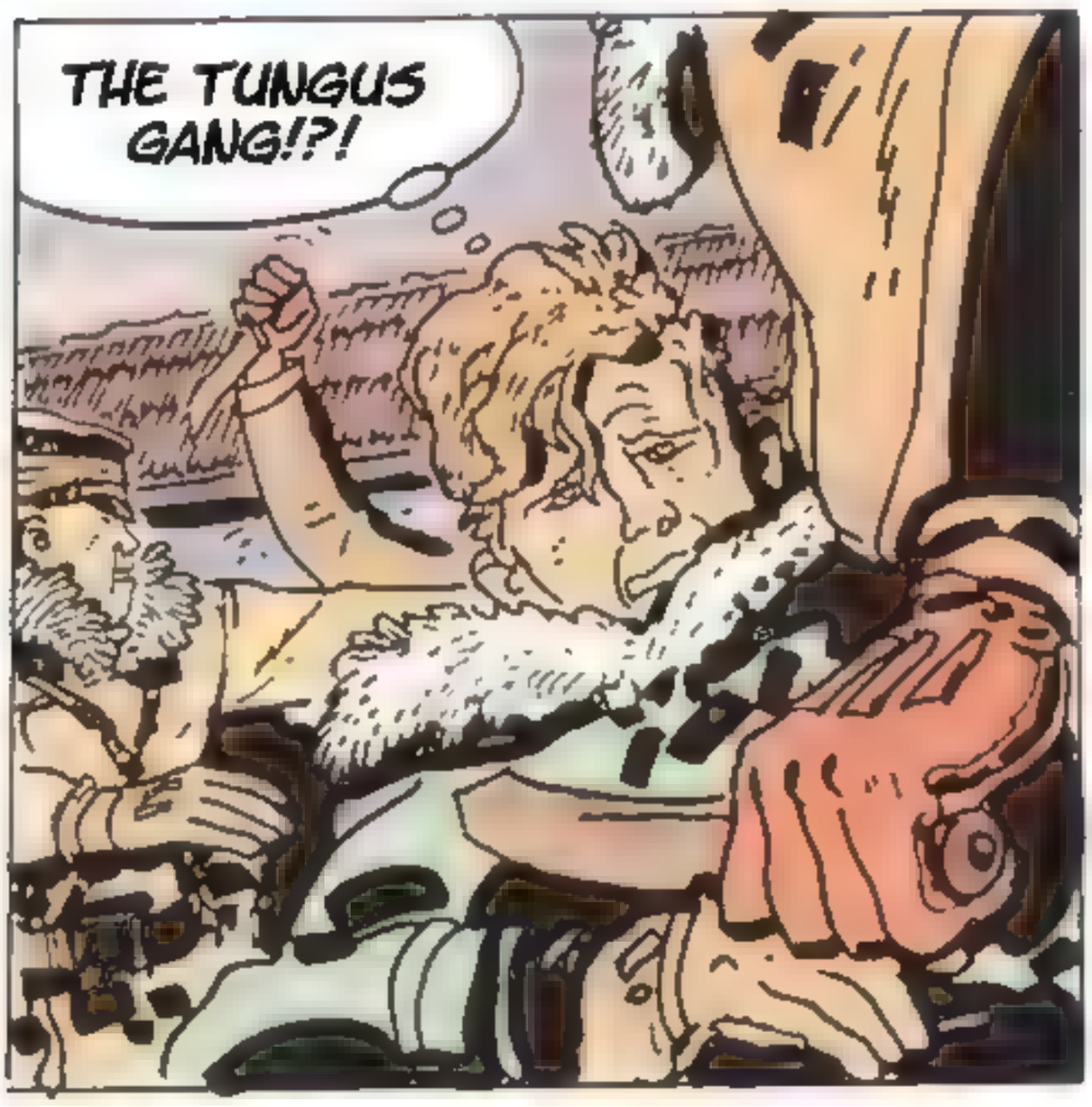

THE TUNGUS GANG!?!

HUGH!

SAKAI?!?

THANK YOU, LIEUTENANT. YOU SAVED MY LIFE.

YES, IN A WAY... TO HAVE THE PLEASURE...

...OF KILLING YOU WITH MY OWN HANDS!

SOMEBODY'S COMING...

MANCHU SOLDIERS.

I CAN'T HEAR ANYTHING!

YOU ARE NOT A NINJA! YOU DO NOT HAVE THE NINJA'S HEARING.

I BETTER GET BACK.

ER! YES? I'M A WAR CORRESPONDENT ...

DO YOU HAVE A LICENSE TO BE OUT AT NIGHT?

BE CAREFUL... KONGUSI BANDISTS ARE ON THE PROWL.

THANKS FOR THE TIP!

HER ARE YOUR DOCUMENTS. WE HAVE ALREADY FOUND TWO CORPSES IN THE STREET. BE CAREFUL.

YEP!

RUSSIANS ON ONE SIDE, JAPANESE ON THE OTHER, AND THE CHINESE IN THE MIDDLE. WHO KNOWS HOW ALL THIS WILL END?

HE MUST BE HERE...

TOCK! TOCK!

MY NAME IS LONDON... I'M LOOKING FOR CORTO MALTESE...

CORTO MALTESE IS NOT HERE.

FENG! LET MISTER LONDON IN!

SORRY TO BOTHER YOU THIS LATE. I THOUGHT I COULD FIND MY FRIEND CORTO HERE.

AH, MISTER LONDON... CORTO MALTESE IS WALKING MY NIECE HOME. LATER, HE IS SUPPOSED TO GO TO HIS FRIEND TONG'S.

TONG? I DON'T KNOW HIM... I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR CORTO SINCE YESTERDAY, FRUITLESSLY.

TONG IS A MASTER OF KUNG FU!

I KEEP MEETING CHARACTERS DEEPLY OBSESSED WITH MARTIAL ARTS HERE.

WHAT A COUNTRY!

WE ARE AT *WAR!* BUT IF YOU LIKE, YOU COULD TELL *ME* WHAT YOU WANT.

I DOUBT YOU COULD HELP ME. I MUST LEAVE THIS COUNTRY WITHOUT LOSING FACE.

BECAUSE OF LIEUTENANT SAKAI?

HOW DO *YOU* KNOW ABOUT THIS?

THE EARS OF THE MANDARIN DRAGON ARE WIDE OPEN.

I MOU LAN, DAUGHTER AND GRAND DAUGHTER OF MANDARIN DRAGONS, CAN HELP YOU WITH YOUR PROBLEMS, MISTER LONDON. HAVE YOU EVER HEARD ABOUT THE TRIAD?

YES, I HEARD ABOUT IT IN SAN FRANCISCO... SOME KIND OF CHINESE MAFIA.

A "CHINESE MAFIA"! YOU MAKE FUN, MISTER LONDON, COMPARING THE TRIAD TO THE ITALIAN BLACK HAND... SERIOUSLY, THE TRIAD IS MORE POWERFUL AND FORMIDABLE... THE TRIAD CAN HELP YOU, MISTER LONDON.

TIMES ARE CHANGING, MISTER LONDON. CHINA'S SECRET SOCIETIES HAVE TO ADAPT TO NEW IDEOLOGIES. THE TRIAD SUPPORTS SUN YAT SEN, THE RADICAL. OUR FAMILY, THE SUNG WANTS A POWERFUL CHINA, WITH BANKS, NEWSPAPERS, TRANSPORTATION. WE ARE A BIG FAMILY. I CAN HELP YOU.

I'M SURE, BUT FOR WHAT REASON?

MAYBE BECAUSE WE LIKE NEITHER THE JAPANESE NOR THE RUSSIANS ...

A "GRAT LOVE" IS STARTING BETWEEN MY COUNTRY AND YOURS. AT LEAST, THAT IS WHAT MY FAMILY THINKS.

THEY ARE INTERESTED IN HELPING AN AMERICAN!

I UNDERSTAND, BUT...

HOW CAN YOU HELP ME IN THIS "SAKAI AFFAIR"?

THERE ARE "DIFFERENT WAYS" WE'LL CHOOSE ONE WHICH WON'T MAKE YOU LOSE FACE.

THANK YOU, MISSUS SUNG, BUT I MAY BE A "DIFFERENT" KIND OF AMERICAN.

I HAVE TO FIND A SOLUTION TO THIS PROBLEM BY MYSELF. I HAVE TO GO.

I HAVE TO GO HOME, I CAN'T LEAVE THAT MANIAC RASPUTIN BY HIMSELF.

GONE!

WHERE HAS THAT MADMAN GONE?

RASPUTIN VANISHED, CAN'T LOCATE CORTO MALTESE, LIEUTENANT SAKAI ALL OVER ME AND HERE I AM, FALLING ASLEEP.

SOCK!

HIDADU MEN!

STOCK!

SHOBU!

YOU WERE LOOKING FOR ME?!

WELL, HELLO! MUST BE A VISION! A VISION OF L'ARLESIENNE?

NOT REALLY... YOU'RE SO PALE... ARE YOU SICK?

I DON'T KNOW... I HAD A NIGHTMARE, I WAS ABOUT TO BE KILLED BY A NINJA, AND THEN YOU APPEARED. THAT'S FUNNY, IT NEVER HAPPENED TO ME BEFORE. THIS IS JUNK.

LISTEN, CORTO, I'M IN A SERIOUS MESS, BUT CAN YOU GIVE A HAND.

A RUSSIAN DESERTER NEEDS HELP...

...IF HE REMAINS HERE. HE'LL BE SHOT. COULD YOU TAKE HIM ON BOARD WITH YOU?

NO PROBLEM.

HELLO!

COULD YOUR EXCELLENCY TELL ME WHERE I MIGHT FIND LIEUTENANT SAKAI?

WHAT FOR?

I NEED HIS AUTHORIZATION FOR A TRANSFER OF WOUNDED PERSONNEL.

LIEUTENANT SAKAI FOR A TRANSFER OF WOUNDED? THERE MUST BE A MISTAKE.

ANYWAY, YOU'LL FIND HIM AT THE "HOUSE OF BUTTERFLIES."

THE "HOUSE OF BUTTERFLIES" IS THE JAPANESE OFFICERS' WHOREHOUSE.

AH!

LAST YEAR IT WAS THE RUSSIAN OFFICERS'!

HERE IS THE "HOUSE OF BUTTERFLIES" WHERE LIEUTENANT SAKAI IS SUPPOSED TO BE.

I SORT OF REMEMBER A FRIEND I HAD THERE...
...WHAT WAS HER NAME?

IS MILENA HERE?

MILENA? WHO ARE YOU? YOU MUST HAVE BEEN AWAY FROM MUKDEN FOR A LONG TIME.

I... I DON'T REMEMBER... WHERE IS MILENA?

MILENA IS NOT HERE ANYMORE... YOU ARE A RUSSIAN...

I KNOW HIM, HE'S THE FRIEND OF VASSILI, MILENA'S MAN.

YOUR NAME IS RASPUTIN.

YES, IT'S ME. WHERE IS MILENA?

I AM SORRY, SHE IS DEAD. BUT WHERE IS HER MAN, VASSILI?

HE IS DEAD!

OH... POOR MAN. I AM SO SORRY. HOW DID YOU GET HERE? IT IS DANGEROUS.

THE TRENCHES WERE MORE DANGEROUS. CAN I EAT?

YES COME IN. WE'LL SERVE YOU SOME-THING

THIS JAPANESE. I THINK I KNOW HIM... WHAT'S HIS NAME?

HE'S AN OFFICER. HIS NAME IS SAKAI, LIEUTENANT SAKAI.

YOU SEEM TO HAVE PROBLEMS... THE JAPANESE AND THE MANCHU POLICE ARE CONTROLLING EVERYONE.

I KNOW. BUT DON'T WORRY. I'M GETTING OUT OF HERE AS FAST AS I CAN.

THE RUSSIANS ARE RETREATING TO THE NORTH.

AND I WANT TO GO SOUTH TO FIND A BOAT.

THE SOUTH OOZES WITH JAPANESE AND BANDITS.

TRUE. BUT I HAVE FOUND FRIENDS WHO CAN HELP ME.

IF YOU WANT, I'LL GO WITH YOU. I'M ALL ALONE.

WHY NOT? AH!.. HELLO...

WHO IS THIS RUSSIAN?

HE'S THE YOUNG MAN WHO DELIVERS PERFUME AND POWDER.

THE YOUNG MAN WHO DELIVERS POWDER? HE COULD USE SOME HIMSELF!

HE'S A BRAVE BOY.

THE WORLD'S FULL OF BRAVE RUSSIAN BOYS. THE BEST ONES ARE THE DEAD ONES.

GOOD EVENING, LIEUTENANT. HONOR US WITH A VISIT AGAIN SOON.

GOOD, THANKS, GIRLS. I'VE GOT TO GO. I HAVE AN APPOINTMENT.

LIEUTENENT SAKAI!

?

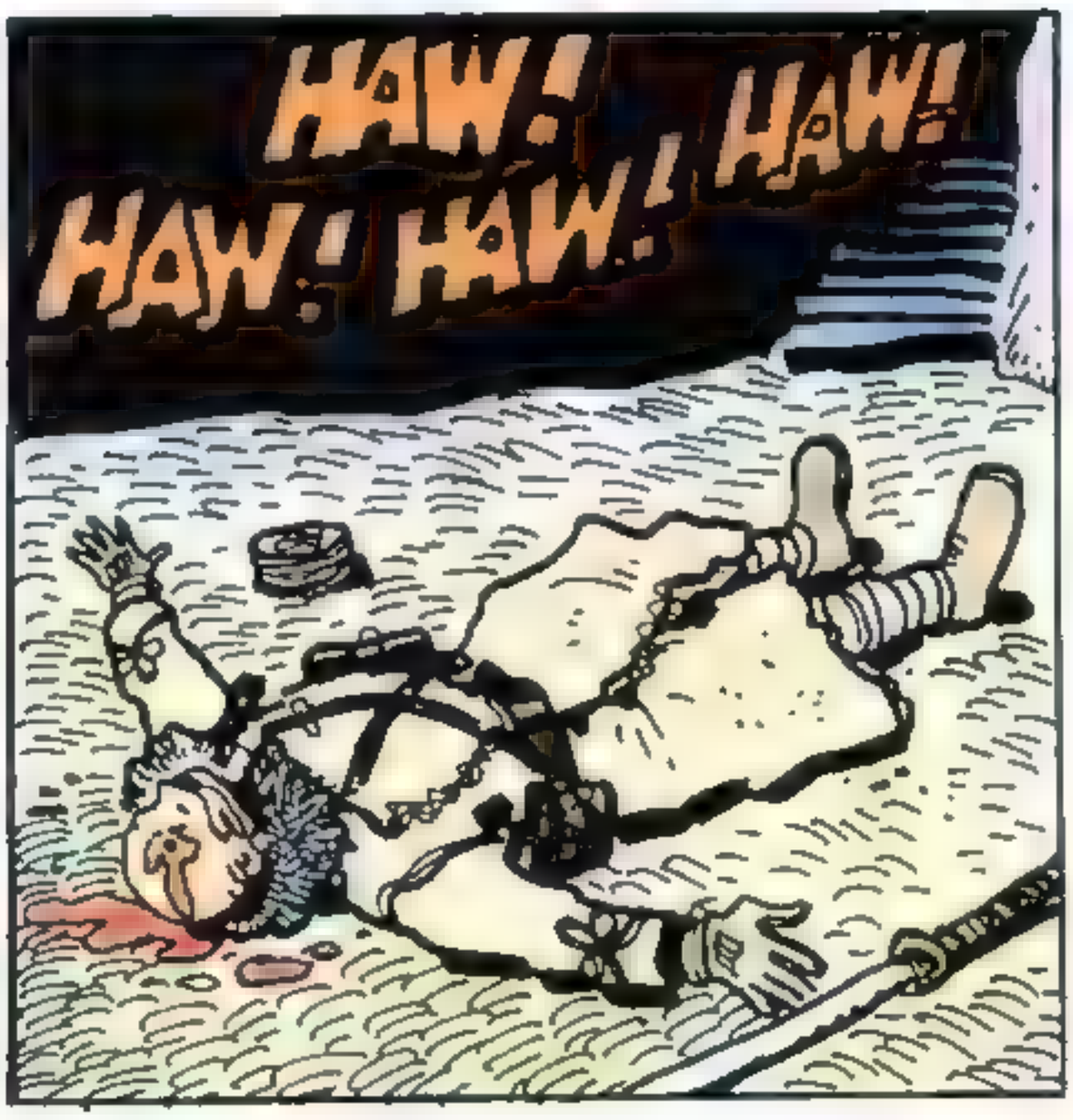
LIEUTENANT SAKAI ...

BANG!

FROM JACK LONDON AND OTHER FRIENDS...
BANG! BANG!

I AM CINDERELLA THE MAD CINDERELLA !!

YEAH GUYS! YEAH!


HAW! HAW! HAW!

MEANWHILE...

AND THAT'S THE WHOLE STORY.

IT'S NOT THAT BAD...

...THE JAPANESE HIGH COMMAND ITSELF WILL STOP THE DUEL. THEY WOULDN'T WANT ONE OF THEIR OFFICERS KILLING A FOREIGN OBSERVER.

REALLY?

YES! RIGHT NOW IT WOULD BE POOR POLITICS.

I HOPE YOUR RIGHT.

TELL ME, WHERE IS YOUR RUSSIAN FRIEND?

BAH... MY FRIEND?!? "FRIEND" MAY BE SAYING TOO MUCH... I DON'T KNOW WHERE HE WENT.

IS THAT YOUR FRIEND?

YEP, IT'S HIM,..

WHO'LL NOW BECOME YOURS: MISTER RASPUTIN.

I TOLD YOU NOT TO GO OUT. IT'S RISKY TO GO OUT THE WITHOUT PROPER AUTHOR-IZASIONS.

I KNOW, BUT THERE WAS SOMEONE I HAD TO SEE... AND WHO IS THIS YOUNG MAN?

PLEASE MEET CORTO MALTESE. HE'LL TAKE YOU OUT OF CHINA.

HMMMH!

HEY! LONDON!

OH, IT'S YOU DAVE? WHAT'S HAPPENING?

AFTER WHAT YOU DID, YOU ASK WHAT'S HAPPENING ?

I'M SORRY, I...

I DON'T UNDERSTAND. WHAT HAVE I DONE?

YOU MURDERED LIEUTENANT SAKAI !!!

SAKAI? DEAD? BUT I DIDN'T HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH IT! I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING!

I'D LIKE TO BELIEVE YOU, BUT THE JAPANESE POLICE WILL NEED PROOF OF YOUR INNOCENCE. WITH THAT DUEL COMING UP, YOU'RE THE PRIME SUSPECT.

I WAS HERE WITH CORTO MALTESE. BESIDES, I WOULDN'T DO SUCH A STUPID THING.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN STUPID? YOUR MAIN PROBLEM IN LIFE HAS BEEN SOLVED FOR YOU AND YOU THINK THAT'S STUPID?

WHAT?

I DIDN'T ASK FOR ANYTHING... I... I...

WELL, HOW UNGRATEFUL CAN YOU GET!

UNGRATEFUL... PROBLEM... WHAT DO YOU WANT? LISTEN, I DON'T UNDERSTAND A WORD OF ALL THIS...

ANYWAY, THIS YOUNG MAN IS RIGHT.

I AM *OFTEN RIGHT*. SOMEONE WITHOUT ASKING YOU, HAS DONE YOU A GREAT SERVICE!

TOCK! TOCK! TOCK!

MISTER LONDON, PLEASE FOLLOW ME TO THE MILITARY POLICE BUREAU.

I'M GOING, BUT I THINK I'LL BE CLEARED...

I'M GOING TO THE STATION, CORTO. WITH YOUR TESTIMONY, JACK LONDON WILL BE CLEARED OF ALL ACCU-SATIONS

I'LL HAVE ALL THE NECESSARY PAPERWORK READY FOR YOUR PASS TO THE INTERNATIONAL ZONE... AND ALSO FOR YOUR FRIEND.

GOODBYE!

THANK YOU, DAVE. I'LL BE AT SOONG'S.

RASPUTIN, I HAVE TO SAY GOODBYE TO MY FRIENDS BEFORE LEAVING, THEN WE'LL DEPART FOR KIN SHIU.

WE'LL TRY TO GET TO TIEN TSIN. FROM THERE WE'LL BOARD A BOAT TO AFRICA... YOU CAN COME WITH ME IF YOU WANT.

FRANKLY, I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT LONDON FINDS IN YOU, BUT I PROMISED I WOULD HELP.

REALLY? YOU DON'T GET IT?

LATER..

WE HAVE ALL WE NEED, DAVE GAVE ME YOUR PAPERS. THE SOONGS GOT US SEATS IN THE INTER-NATIONAL TRAIN TO TAKU...

...JACK LONDON WILL NOT BE CHARGED WITH THE MURDER OF LIEUTENANT SAKAI, BUT HE'LL BE KICKED OUT OF MANCHURIA... "PERSONA NON GRATA".

OH... DAVE TELLS ME LONDON WISHES TO THANK YOU.

OH YEAH? WHAT FOR?

MAYBE BECAUSE YOU KILLED LIEUTENANT SAKAI...

HOW DID YOU KNOW?

I ASKED YOU: HOW DID YOU & LONDON FIND OUT THAT I KILLED SAKAI?

OTHERS THAN YOU ARE SMART, PAL!